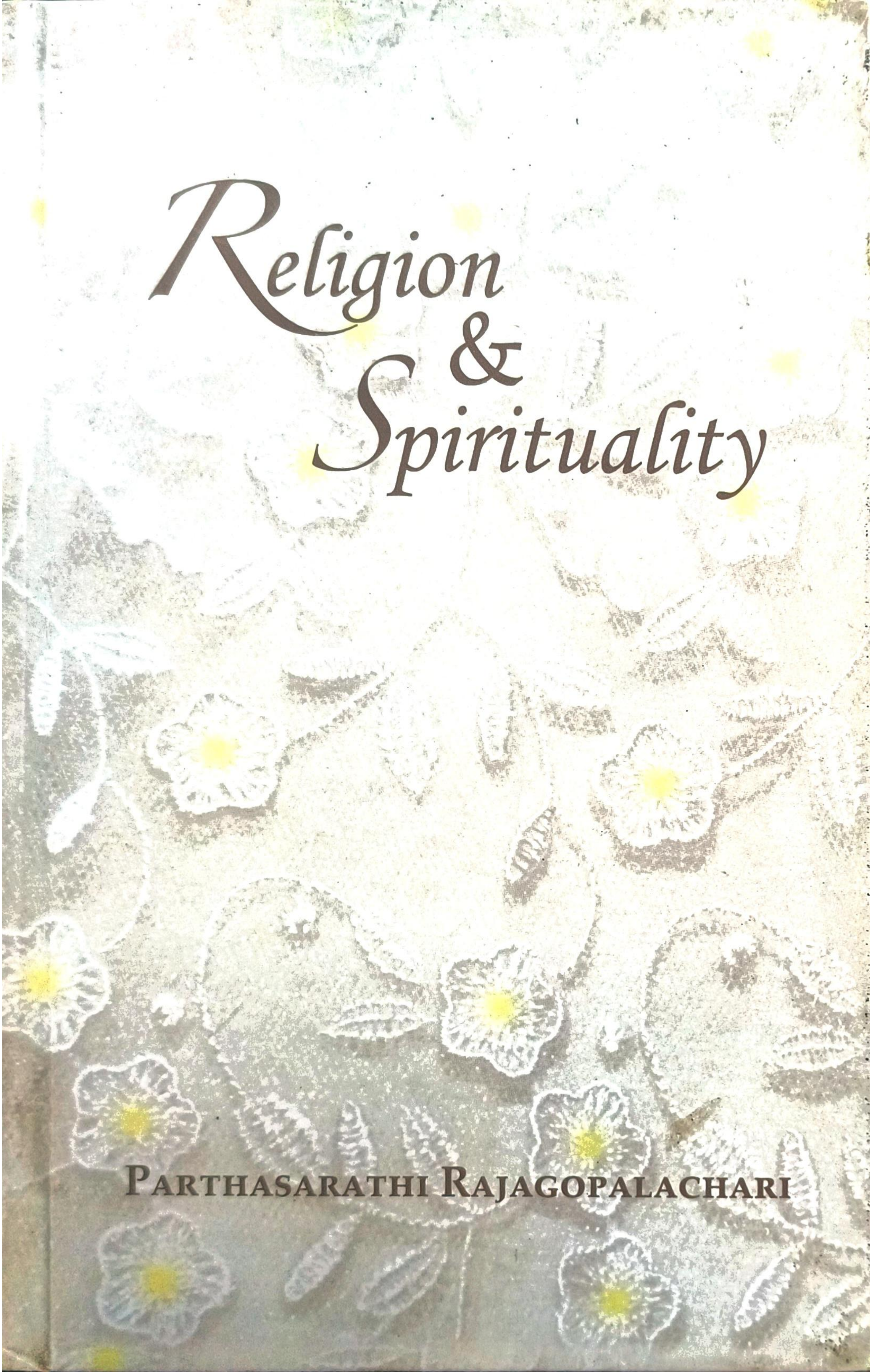

Religion & Spirituality

PARTHASARATHI RAJAGOPALACHARI

Religion & Spirituality

Religion
&
Spirituality

Talks given at Augerans, France
9 to 16 July 1991

Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari

SHRI RAM CHANDRA MISSION
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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that we present this second reprint of talks given by Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari, during a seminar at the European Ashram in Augerans, France, from the 9th to the 16th of July 1991.

The talks reflect the Master's well-known ability to communicate deep spiritual philosophy in a simple, accessible way to people of all ages, from all walks of life and cultures. He provides a source of guidance for all spiritual seekers around the world.

These particular talks are addressed to European students of Sahaj Marg raja yoga, who come from a predominantly Christian culture. The talks are thought-provoking, aimed at common understanding and providing much insight into the nature of religion and spirituality, death, and approaches to teaching and learning at different levels. They provide ongoing wisdom about the spiritual journey. Throughout the discourses we find the underlying message that wisdom comes through opening our hearts by spiritual practice, letting go of attitudes and prejudices, and learning by experience, with the loving guidance and support of the Master.

1

Education & Understanding

We have been experimenting with some training classes in India. The course lasts about a week – six days; and there are four sessions every day. I think that the total is about twenty-four hours or maybe twenty-seven. The course content was more theoretical: starting from a discussion of religion, religious systems, the six systems of philosophy in India, yoga and subjects like that. It is going well and the abhyasis of India (I mean abhyasis means prefects also) – I think that they have understood something of the Indian cultural background, which to them as Indians was perhaps necessary. But, I think some similar thing is also necessary here. Not that you need to understand Indian culture or the Indian background of development of yoga systems, but, at least certain things like the role of ethics in our lives, the role of morality in our lives, the role

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of spirituality, the role of religion, the role of the Master, and most important your own roles.

I think this last thing is what is missing when we are not successful in something that we undertake. We are always concerned with the role of the master in human evolution, the role of spirituality, the role of science, the role of the arts, the role of the autobus, the role of spaghetti. It has a role too in my life – I mean it makes me happy, it contributes to my putting on weight. Some pleasure, some problems. (Pleasure and problems both begin with 'P' and both go together. Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari also begins with a 'P' unfortunately. I hope it is not a problem – Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari.) I have now come to have the feeling that we have to structure our training course for the Westerners, the Occidentals, in a different way.

Now, this I cannot do by myself because I am not a professor of any subject. I have never studied Hinduism; I am not a student of religion; I don't know any languages; and so I have a lot of problems with this. In India, we had developed a faculty – all PhDs in various subjects. Then, I came up against this limitation that PhDs follow a particular way of teaching. Everything seems to fall into a rut, as we say in English. Where the cart goes, the wheel is creating a groove on the road, which becomes a rut, and later on the cart can only go in that rut. It becomes stereotyped, becomes monotonous, tedious, repetitive – all the faults that the educational system itself suffers from today. The same thing said over and over again, ad nauseam. In fact, what I would say, in short, is that there is no creativity in the teaching process itself.

If you are to create people who have creativity, the process itself must be creative. The process must itself, in another sense – evolve. To my understanding, evolution is the only truly creative facet of existence. That which does not evolve cannot be creative. Therefore, you find this distinction between machine-made artifacts and hand-made artifacts. Something made by hand is certainly much more valuable than what is turned out on a machine. You can have all the masterpieces of the great artists reproduced by printing, or sculptures created three-dimensionally on machines – exact replicas of the original – inorganic cloning, like computers are built. But that is not creation, that is only repetition, copying. That is why people prefer to buy something that is hand-made, even if it is crude, as it reflects the creative spirit of the one who has made it.

Now, teachers must learn to be creative. How to bring a creative teacher into existence I don't know; because, not being a teacher, I don't know what is a creative teacher. But I remember long ago in school, in Jubbulpore I think (I must then have been twelve years old), we used to have debating societies. They were British schools, public schools as we call them in

India, and we were taught to debate. They would take up a random point – "Right is greater than might," or "Might is greater than right," and we would have two sets of boys arguing like heck over which is right and which is might, and whether might is right or right is might. This would last a couple of hours. There would be a lot of shouting and arguing and desk banging. Eventually, our professor, who was a very understanding man, would say, "Well, it only shows how difficult this question is. It is something you have to decide, because in some situations might may be right, but under all situations right is might," which only means that a decision, to be right, must be ethical and not backed by strength.

By force we can do anything, but you know, at least women will know, that if you feed your child by force it doesn't retain it. If you try to force feed, it is no use. Everything must be accepted. Even love cannot be forced. That is one of the problems of the West incidentally, that one who loves thinks that he or she has the right to force that love upon somebody who is the object of that love. But because there is this force behind it, there is a retaliatory counter-effect so that the very thing that you want to achieve is negated, and your efforts are repulsed and then you start weeping and saying, "Oh I love him so much," or, "I love her so much, and you know he doesn't reciprocate." How can there be reciprocation? Because, everything is subject to the laws of Newton.

Action and reaction are equal and opposite. You can love, but you cannot force love.

So if that is the truth, education also cannot be forced down somebody's throat. One particular debate I enjoyed at the age of twelve was whether understanding is more necessary or appreciation. We had very good English teachers in those days. Now, we did not know the difference between understanding and appreciation; so my teacher brought an apple and we were all laughing for some time because that was the original trick played on Adam and Eve, the apple. But anyway he brought it in and said, "Take a bite." So somebody took a bite and he said, "Now John, did you understand it or did you appreciate it?" He said, "Well I appreciated it, Sir." And he said, "Now take out that poem from that book and read it." So it was read out and he said, "Now did you understand it or appreciate it?" He said, "Neither, because I don't like poetry. I don't appreciate it. I don't know what this guy is talking about, so I don't understand it." Eventually, after half a day of debate, the conclusion was that understanding is fundamental to even appreciation. It should not be passed off as a boyhood or scholastic exercise in merely conducting a debate because, for me, it was something very fundamental, that if you don't understand someone, you cannot appreciate that person. If you cannot understand something, you cannot fully appreciate it, unless it is a merely gastronomic exercise.

So in teaching also we have to understand what is trying to be taught, what the teacher is trying to teach. If we understand that, I think automatically we will understand everything that is taught. Because understanding is seeking to know 'why'. Why is this fellow teaching me? Normally there is a revulsion about teachers – "Oh, who the heck does he think he is, sitting there on his big fat so-and-so, trying to lecture me?" But if he will try to penetrate into this man's motive, not mental but from the heart, "Why is he interested in teaching us at all? What is his interest in teaching us? How is he going to benefit?" You see, this is the most important question, because this question of how is he going to benefit from my learning something that he is teaching me is fundamental to the relationship between the teacher and the taught. If there is suspicion, if there is doubt – "Ah-ha, this guy is here only to earn a salary, the more he teaches, the more he gets; he is doing it for his sake, not our sake," the rapport between the two breaks down. I mean it is not even established in most cases.

We have also to understand why we are there to listen. What are we here for? If you don't like to be taught, why should we be here at all? So you have to understand why you are seeking understanding, knowledge. What is this all about? Is it just to spend half an hour or one hour, and then go back and say, "Oh, we had wonderful courses you know." Today, it is the fashion to undertake courses. So many of them: courses in language, linguistics, courses in semantics, courses in I don't know what. Some three days, some fifteen days – all very expensive.

Now there comes the second problem – because we don't pay for spiritual education, many of us doubt the value of spiritual education. "Yes, but he doesn't take anything. How can he be really interested in us?" If I have to take interest only when I'm paid for it, it is no longer interest. It may be interest in the monetary sense, that I've invested say two million marks in a school and you are all paying me the fees, which is the interest on that. So there are always two unknowables in this equation. There is the X, there is the Y. I hope our mathematics professor is here. The X is one, the Y is the other; both are unknowable, both are immutable, both are ever-changing, both are funny in many ways, and both seek a common understanding.

This common understanding is the most important because, unless we lay a ground for common understanding, neither can the teacher understand the student nor can the student understand the teacher. Understand in the real sense – not with the head but with the heart.

Today, one of the frailties built into the system of understanding is motivation, the idea of motivation. It is a business school terminology. Motivation for business managers, motivation for sales managers.

Everybody has to be motivated. So we are prone to ask, "What is motivating this guy to teach me?" That he may be motivated by nothing more than your welfare, your happiness, your spiritual growth, does not immediately penetrate us, penetrate our understanding. Because, in a materialistic society where the satisfaction of the self, the welfare of the self, the continued existence of the self, are the prime considerations, it is difficult to understand that somebody could be interested in something which is not in his personal interest at all.

I think that the most important need is to establish this understanding, at least in a spiritual organisation like ours. That, he who is trying to teach us has really nothing to gain; and that this is the truth of the matter – that if he wanted to gain he could have gained in so many ways. He could have been a professor of oriental mythology, he could have been a professor of semantics, he could have been a professor of philosophy, or even a professor of spirituality. I know there are universities who will pay for it: classes in transmission! We can start off with chains, with gears, with wheels etc., and go on to transmission of the ultimate stage. Take three months over this, cover fifty-two hours of teaching and earn I don't know, thirty thousand dollars in an American university easily. So why is he not there, and why is he here?

So, if you are able to think over these aspects, and decide why you are here, why he is here, are we here for the common purpose and is there any giving and taking here of a material nature which will be obnoxious to such a relationship? Or if not, is it a pure, free, frank relationship where we exchange ideas, thoughts, knowledge and understanding itself? Then, I think there will be a really enviable and flowery approach to this relationship, and we will gain something really vital by our participation in these seminars. Otherwise it is too mechanical. I believe it is at the present moment very mechanical. We come and we meditate. Many of us don't know why we meditate at all. We are worried about ethics and morality. We are worried about discipline. We are angry with them. "Who is this fellow to come and impose upon us some funny Eastern mode of thought, mode of existence? What is this funny morality? How can I be different from everybody else in society? When everybody is doing it how can it be wrong if I do it?" You see, all these questions come, and if we would think over it we would find that they are questions based on our own selfish interests.

We rebel precisely because we are attached to that which we don't want to give up. Like a child will not give up its toys. "Put away this." "No, no I cannot do without it." And we know that when, for instance, a man of twenty-eight takes his teddy bear to bed with him, we say this fellow must be crazy. He is married but he still keeps his teddy bear next to him. For heaven's sake, what's wrong with him?

"No, no. I am attached to my teddy bear." But there you think it is crazy. But when we bring our childish habits, childish ideas into adult life as abhyasis, and you are told that this is no more feasible, no more good for you, no more permissible; there is trouble, there is eruption. Then we have all these funny ideas of liberty and equality and fraternity – good old French untruths.

So we have to talk again and again and again, and tell you that this is for your good. If somebody gets drunk he suffers. If he is foolish enough to say, "Yes, but you know it was fun while it lasted," we must always understand that fun lasts for a short span, misery lasts much longer. And every incremental addition to fun imposes a much bigger incremental addition to the subsequent misery. This is not an avoidable equation at all. It is irreversible. But people say, "Well it doesn't matter. You fellows, you have neither the fun nor the misery." "Yes, that is precisely what we are trying to be. If you want the one, you have to have the other."

Then comes this question of culture and you know, "We are Europeans and our ways are different." Yes, but you cannot have a common goal and different ways, isn't it? You cannot all sit in one class and expect to be taught history, geography, morality, semantics, philosophy, politics. Each class teaches something specific.

So that old debate in school, about this 'understanding' and 'appreciation'.... Because, I find, in Europe, appreciation is there in the sense of critical appreciation – tearing down things into bits and pieces, analysing them mercilessly. Like you are doing with your Christs and Saint Johns and everybody – finding out whether there was a woman in his life. I mean this seems to be some sort of, I don't know what to call it, dirty interest, a morbid interest, a sexually morbid interest in digging up women in other people's lives, even if one is a Christ. So what if he had a woman in his life? You also have women in your lives and men in your lives. Are you Christs? This is the question we should ask. Assuming Christ had an affair, he still became Christ and his teaching is lasting two thousand years at least. What is your teaching going to last? How long is it going to last? Is there a teaching to last at all? Is there a memory that you will leave behind you? Will there be somebody to speak when you are dead and say, "Yes, he existed, or she existed"? Will there be even one? There are millions to speak about Christ. Will there be one to speak about you?

So, we should give up these ugly, nasty, dirty thoughts. Look to the good, forget the bad, if any, remembering that in the material life the two go together. There cannot be man without woman, there cannot be truth without untruth, there cannot be solid without liquid, there cannot be air without a vacuum. This is what the philosophy says, that these two go together.

Transcend both because you cannot negate one and keep the other.

So it is understanding that we seek – 'why', not 'how', not 'what'. Everybody knows how to be moral, how to be ethical. Everybody knows what is morality, what is ethicality; we don't have to be taught these things. Every society has these norms of culture, of behaviour, gentlemanliness, superlative humanness. So it would be stupid to try to teach in an evolved society like this, and start off from the A and the B and the C of all these things, because it is all well known. The fact that something is not followed does not mean that it is not known. It only means that it is not accepted. It was accepted in the past, it is not accepted today. Why? We have to ask ourselves these questions. Because, and there are several answers – because everybody does it, because without it I cannot exist. And instead of following a straight path, we keep following a circular path – going back and back and back, again and again into the same mire, and the same morass of ignorance and misery, self-inflicted.

So we live a repetitive life falling from mistake into mistake, because each future mistake appears tempting – full of the goodness of life, companionship, love. Three weeks later there is another heartbreak and we say, "Why? Why is it happening?" "Because you made it happen." "No, no it must be samskara."

"Then, you are not doing the cleaning." If our samskara is going to repeat eternally the same nonsense of our existence, then it is obvious that we are not doing the cleaning.

So, we are finding indulgent, self-indulgent excuses for all our behavioural mistakes, mistakes which we knowingly commit. Most of us, please be assured of this, most of us know in advance that the course that we are undertaking is disastrous but, being in Sahaj Marg, there is an all-protecting influence, the divine Master, and He will protect. This very facile and very childish assumption that the master is there to protect us from our own mistakes, knowingly conducted and performed, is false. When you read *The Role of the Master in Human Evolution* again, if you find this thought anywhere, mark it and send it to me so that I can remove it. The master is not there to protect us from knowing mistakes wantonly committed. I cannot take a knife in my hand and cut my throat and expect Babuji to materialise in front of me and snatch it away from me. Accidental, yes! But for voluntary, knowing acts of self-destruction, there is no protection. I refer, of course even to human relationships.

Every day I get letters saying, "My life is changing, I have met a man." I don't know how this business of meeting men can go on and on and on repetitiously – again and again. "Once bitten, twice shy," they say in English. But here, once bitten, the desire to be bitten again seems to be increased. Twice bitten, we want to be bitten a third time to prove to ourselves that we shall be bitten. Fourth time, we try to seek the final confirmation – "No more after this." Four times bitten, not yet shy. Fifth time – "No, no, I thought, after all destiny must change. Chari, you're always speaking of change, change, change. Why doesn't my life change?" There is change. The biting is true, but the object that is biting you is different. Once it is a fly, once it is a bee, once it is a snake, once it is a scorpion.

So who can come and protect you? Protection must be deserved. I don't believe in any automatic protection. I mean, if a master will protect, why not God protect us? After all He is the ultimate beloved, lover, love itself. What is He doing? Should He not protect me? He doesn't protect because He says, "I have given you a will. I have given you the intelligence to use that will properly. The onus is upon you. You have to protect yourself. You have to guide your life in such a way that it shall be free of destructive influences. If you are taking every possible step in this direction, then My power will assist you in it. But if you are going haywire, and wilfully doing things which you know are wrong, are self-destructive, then there is no protection." It's like a car. You drive a car over a precipice, and expect the hand of Moses or Allah or somebody to come and hold you there, and put you back on the road, hug you and say, "My son, don't do this again." Doesn't happen.

Therefore this misery of the Occidental: why are there children at three with diabetes? Why are children born today with this dreadful AIDS? Why are children born with heart disease? If God is love, how can this happen? That which belongs to us, the responsibility to lead a right life in a right way for a right purpose, we are transferring to God, without transferring it entirely and saying, "I have no more any will, no more any purpose, no more any destiny. That too is yours." We are wantonly holding on to one part of our existence – the human at its worst, meanest, stupidest, and wanting to hand over spiritual destiny to Him, hoping that He will forget everything and still make us saints.

Babuji Maharaj used to say, "Either you give me everything, or you keep everything." By everything he meant good and bad, sickness and health. "You give me both your health and your sickness, your happiness and your unhappiness, everything, but you want to retain your happiness and give me your unhappiness. You want to keep your health and give me your sickness." He said, "That transaction is not acceptable. Everything or nothing." This understanding must come.

Now, how are we to teach this understanding? Because, the first problem in teaching, in my experience, I have never been a teacher, but in my experience, is to make the teaching acceptable in some way. Indian mothers, when children don't take their milk, put a little honey on the tip, and the child starts taking its milk. There is a certain element of enticement. People have to be enticed to learn. But in spirituality it doesn't exist. What enticement can we offer you here? Instant liberation? But then you won't meditate any more, you won't be there to meditate.

So the difficulty in putting something across, transferring a body of understanding is a very real difficulty. And to get over this difficulty, you know the teacher has to think much more than you have to think. He has to know how to overcome this problem, how to make the teaching acceptable. Because mostly we find there are teachers who go about without tackling this problem, leaving it to you to understand or not understand as you may choose. And therefore we have this parody of education where in a class thirty percent pass, seventy percent don't. If the teaching had been structured in such a way, if the approach had been structured in such a human way, there should have been hundred percent success.

So this is the problem we are trying to overcome. Because every day I get people coming to see me – some don't accept Sahaj Marg and follow it; some don't understand transmission and receive it; some don't know why they are here but continue to be here. "If you know not..." – you know that ancient

Chinese proverb? I will put it in a different way. If you don't know what you are here for, then how can you accept the benefit when it comes to you? Because you don't know what the benefit is. It's like my going to a nice Chinese or French restaurant. The menu is all in French and I just close my eye and play tic-tac-toe and say, "Bring this," and it is that hated object – snails, escargots. Maybe the French like it very much, but for me it is obnoxious. So I cannot play tic-tac-toe with French menus. I must ask somebody, "What is this?" And I must not be satisfied when he says, "Oh, it's wonderful Chari, you must try it, it's one of the gastronomic delicacies of the French cuisine." Yes, but when it comes before me and I see it's a snail or something equally obnoxious....

So you have to develop this idea that your need must be made known to your teacher. What are you looking for? Have you evaluated your need? Not your wants, your real needs. Do you have a spiritual need at all? Or are you here just for fun? Another *vacances*, which the French are so crazy about. "Oh no, I am on *vacances*, Augerans." "Oh, vacances in Augerans, what do you do there?"

So, unless your wishes, or shall we say needs, are really clarified, instead of just writing to your Master for help in this situation, help in that situation, help in the third situation, help in the fourth situation, it's of no use. I get hundreds of letters, all asking for help, some asking for blessings.

So far nobody has asked for spiritual knowledge, which is a pity.

So I think the first teaching, with which I shall close this talk today is: please evaluate your needs to yourself. Understand what you are trying to be, to become. We know what we are! What are we trying to become? Have I a real understanding of it? When we say, "I want to become a perfect human being," do I understand what it really means? Can I exist as I am and yet be a perfect human being? Can I go around leading my life with multiple loves, multiple attachments, and yet become a perfect human being? What is the use of saying, "My heart is the master's," and then trading it in the marketplace every fortnight, every week, every day? If it is his, how can you give it to somebody else? If it is yet yours to retain and to trade and to bargain for, how can you say truthfully that you have already given your heart to the master? If your heart is with the master, how can your body be somewhere else? Is not the heart in the body? Until the person is dead, of course. Then if that is true, why is this body here and not there?

You see all these fundamental questions have to be answered, because love is fundamental to existence. Spirituality deals only with love. Because God is love, love is the total and ultimate perfect condition where you don't love, but you become love. Now how can you become love if you are throwing it off like fire throwing off sparks all the time? It must be contained, it must be allowed to mature.

If you want to drink good whiskey or wine you allow it to mature. You put it away in a wine cellar and forget it for so many years. But our love we are not forgetting, every moment of our time it is there, blasting us with its needs, good or bad, moral or immoral, permissible or unpermissible. It is knocking and we are responding. Even a person who walks on crutches is walking around thinking of it. One in bed unable to move is thinking of it, youth thinking of it, old age thinking of it, middle age wallowing in it. So, there are very fundamental issues that must be understood by you before you can be a successful spiritual practitioner. If these are understood and the practice is followed correctly, there is some chance of your becoming a successful spiritual person.

Then comes the question of being elevated to the levels of the perfect human being where you are love. You don't love any more, there is nothing to love, nothing to hate, because you are that. A diamond is a diamond. It does not break itself into pieces and throw one-point pieces around saying, "Take a bit of me here, take a bit of me there." In a short time there is nothing left. This is how we are emptying our lives, our existences, so that in a few years there is nothing left in us, nothing to give, nothing to take, the vessel is broken, and what is put in it, you cannot retain.

So, the tragedy of our human existence begins with the so-called teenagers. "They must have experience, Chari." Of what? Of evil? Is it necessary that a child should get AIDS before it knows that certain things are not permissible for its good? Is it necessary that a person should go through three marriages before he understands what marriage is? I cannot understand this training in these western countries, which exposes children to things which are dangerous, which are un-understandable, which are yet so enticing that they plump into it, fall into it, and then say, "Oh my daughter is this, my seventeen year old is that." You find girls of seventeen with three marriages and two babies. I mean it's too awkward for me to continue to mention all this, because there is always a reaction. "This is our society, how can we escape?" But we are here to escape. Not to escape in the real sense of running away from something, but to evolve out of it.

If one person can evolve, why not a second? One person always shows the way, the others follow. You climb up the mountain, you have a guide going in front. He shows not merely the way but the possibility. If he stops and sits and starts breathing heavily you will say, "What sort of a guide have I got? This fellow can't climb it himself. And he's trying to guide me up? For heaven's sake, let's change the guide." Wouldn't you say it?

So a true guide is not so much a teacher as an example. Like the man in front at night holds the lamp, and you follow him, because he's showing not the way, but illuminating the way for you to follow. So why we should follow such a person? Is he really acceptable? Should he be followed at all? Now, how to understand this, unless you have understood something of all that we are talking about here. What is spirituality? What is the final goal? What is destiny? What is God? What is love? Unless we understand this how can you say, "This fellow has something in him which makes me follow him?" Otherwise it's a blind following – again a superstitious following, like other followings. We follow political leaders, we follow actresses, we follow dentists. We don't know why.

It should not happen here, that I follow a guru, ignorant of what he represents, ignorant of what he has achieved, because I am totally ignorant of what I should achieve. So you have to know first what it is that Sahaj Marg offers. Some understanding of this you must have. Then you must come to the understanding that you are seeking that very thing that is being offered to you. Then comes the question of applying your will sufficiently to follow the way which can lead you to that place, or that destination, or that goal. Then the possibility arises that here you have a real abhyasi, interested in his own spiritual evolution, knowingly accepting a system, knowingly accepting a master or a guru, knowing that the guru represents that which he is trying to become.

So, I would first of all urge all of you to read more and more of Sahaj Marg literature, and understand these basic thrusts of the Sahaj Marg system. Otherwise we do not know what Sahaj Marg is. People come to me and say, "Chariji, is Sahaj Marg a cult?" I don't know what is a cult. It is the truth from my heart. I still do not know what is a cult. "No, no, a cult is something where many people follow one man." Then politics should be a cult. Religion should be a cult. We follow fish on the seas, hoping to net them. That should be a cult. So, we must know that which we must know, and not worry about all those things which we need not know. I have instances of abhyasis going for some Buddhist practice for some time, some lamaistic practices for some time, and then coming here and saying, "You know I am destroyed, this has shattered me." "Why did you go there?" We go because we do not know what we are doing there, and we don't know what we are doing here too. The need to wander out of the field in which you are grazing. A cow may feel that the pasture there is greener than here. "Distant pastures are greener," they say. But we are not cows. If I know exactly what is being given here, offered here, what the old fellow who is sitting there is trying to do for me, I understand why he is trying to do it because he has done it himself. This requires faith, because there are no miracles. One does not stand up and become a Christ or a Hanuman or a Krishna and say, "Look at me."

So this comprehensive understanding of the system alone can make you a real abhyasi. Only that can make you progress. Otherwise such progress as we make is incidental. I won't say it is accidental. It is incidental. It rests with the giver to give us something. As Babuji said, "Everybody who comes to me, I throw him at least a few crumbs. But the real thing is reserved for the true seeker."

Thank you.

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Learn By Doing

Babuji Maharaj used to say that teaching is the most difficult, because normally we teach at one level, whereas real teaching should be conducted on many levels. Therefore real teachers are few, and conventional teachers are many of course. The absolutely true teaching is when you don't teach but the student learns. Of course it is very difficult to understand this idea – that you really don't teach but the student learns everything. But that is the tradition, and that is the fact too – that the best teaching is assimilated when it is not taught. And why this should be so is perhaps a psychological question, because there is always a resistance to being taught which is a manifestation of the ego – for instance, "I know everything, I have nothing else to learn." This starts from childhood.

I have observed my grandson growing up, and for me it has been a very big education. To see all

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10 July 1991

the possibilities manifesting themselves, even from the age of say eight or nine months, when the child wants to do everything by itself. But there is one very important difference that I have discovered – the child wants to do everything by itself so that it can achieve a certain mastery over its environment. When we grow up, we want to do everything ourselves merely to show off that we can do everything. And then later on, we want to do it to the exclusion of everybody else, because now the ego is at play, and says, "I alone will do this." So, if you look at it in this triune aspect: the first as gaining a mastery over a situation, the second as exhibiting an ability to do it, and the third as a manifestation of ego that he alone can do it, it is a very fascinating interplay of three different forces. In the first stage there is no ego. I don't know if psychologists will agree. But at the age of eight months, twelve months, eighteen months, there is really no ego. The child wants to do it, wants to learn how to do it. Therefore it grabs every opportunity of being able to do it. In the process, it falls, it hurts itself, causes agony to the mother especially. But it is a process we all have to undergo. In the middle stage, the ego is growing, the abilities are static. The last stage has perhaps only the ego.

So, as we grow up, the resistance to being taught increases. The child learns by itself. To assume that the parents teach it something is not only arrogance on the part of the parents, but ignorance on the part of the parents. The child learns by itself, by doing. This is precisely the way we try to adopt in Sahaj Marg. Allowing the abhyasi to learn by himself. I am not talking now of learning in the sense of traditional book knowledge, languages, and things like that. Even there this principle applies, that unless you are willing to learn, your teacher can teach you nothing. "You can take a horse to the pond, but you can't make it drink." It's not only a proverb, it's a reality. Always reality becomes proverbs. Why? Because I choose not to learn.

I know how much trouble three of my French teachers have had with me (he chuckles), they couldn't teach me much. Therefore today I am still talking to you in English. If I had applied myself properly, I should have been able to speak all this to you in French. It's very simple English that I'm speaking. I could have managed with perhaps a vocabulary of less than eight hundred words. But there is also the ego, that, I am doing spiritual work, I am not required to speak different languages. It is hidden! So, not knowing a language becomes a point of ego. Initially we learn something and know it, and we become egotistic. "I know!" Later on, you say, "I don't know, I need not know, I desire not to know, I care not to know." So, the ego is manifested not only in doing, it is also manifested in not doing. It is in every phase of activity. Like Julius Caesar said, "I will not come. I shall not come," to the Senate. First he says, "I cannot come." And then according to Shakespeare, Cassius asks him, "But why? What shall I tell them, Caesar?" Then he has to indulge in this arrogance of saying, "Say that Caesar will not come."

So, we proceed to bolster our egos – first, I cannot learn; second, I will not learn. This problem of the ego is the most difficult for a teacher. I don't know how many teachers recognise it. They think students are stupid. I do not think so at all. No student is stupid. I had a very interesting discussion with a professor of mathematics, who is perhaps here, who is going to conduct experiments with so-called stupid people, failures, and prepare them for what you call the baccalaureate degree, at age eleven, twelve, like that. He is also, for purposes of variety I suppose, going to take some stupid people aged sixty-four like myself, and prepare them for the same examination. Now, if that stupid person will cooperate, you can do anything with that stupid person. There is no stupidity other than self-imposed stupidity – a closed mind, an unwillingness to learn, an arrogance which says I shall not learn. A good teacher must recognise this, and attack that unwillingness, subdue it, entice the owner of that unwillingness out of his or her shell into which they have wrapped themselves. And the battle is won.

This problem we face with our abhyasis. "Why should I meditate?" I don't know if this question is so common in Europe, but in India we are frequently asked this question, "If Babuji is a special personality, God incarnate, why can't he liberate me without my going through these stupid processes of meditation and cleaning and all this nonsense?" I also used to wonder why not. It would be nice if I could just go to Babuji once and he would say, "Well, it is finished. You are liberated." But then, there is no fun in life. You go for the job the first morning and you are made the Managing Director. There is no fun any more. People don't recognise that something achieved without effort has no satisfaction for us.

Sometimes I suspect that really good educational institutions like the Harvard Institute, for instance, deliberately make their courses a little difficult to enhance your sense of achievement. "Oh, I am out of Harvard, or I am out of UCLA." We can go back to our simian ancestry, put up our hands and shout, "Aaahhhhhhhhhh!" You know, like Bjorn Borg does on the tennis court every time he wins a match. We are simian in our essence even today. We have to broadcast our victories by bellowing like apes and by thumping our chests. You see it on every playfield. Why this reversal to our ancestry? Why not we become divine, and when we have achieved something, sit quietly in meditation and thank the giver? Because it is again the ego – "I have achieved it, I have done it."

I remember that when Babuji Maharaj passed away and I was announced as his successor, I received a congratulation card, typically from America. It could not be from anywhere else in the world. It showed a staircase in profile with a dachsund dog, which has put its two forepaws on the top stair, tongue lolling out, gasping, and on top of it is written, I MADE IT! (laughter) Typically American reaction; (laughter) typically American sentiment, and a typically American card. For them there is no life other than the life of achievement. Not learning, not knowledge, but success. "He is a successful guy!" I remember one girl, one of our abhyasis, who introduced her father to me and said, "This is my dad. He is a good provider." She did not say, "I love him, he loves me and he is a wonderful father," etc. She just said, "He's a good provider." Now if this is the relationship between father and daughter – that he provides well for my existence, gives me good food, keeps the fridge full of coke in two-gallon or four-gallon cans, I don't know, gallon flagons of ice cream, he is a good father, he is a good provider.

So everything has become distorted. Human relationships have become distorted. The husband is a good husband only if he can give you furs and diamonds. And of course, the great Kinsey messed everything up with his reports glorifying certain aspects of the man-woman relationship without which, today, we think there is no man-woman relationship – the erotic aspects of life. How much erotic is your husband? I suppose, they would have a table, on which you can put eighty percent, ninety percent, seventy-five percent! This is all wrong education. This is titillation of the senses, titillatory education. But we have been brought up in that tradition in the West.

So when people come to Sahaj Marg, they expect experiences – "Yes, but I have been meditating for three months and I have no experience." Now, we have to train people out of this idea – that this is an experiential system. This is an evolutionary system. It is also a revolutionary system; but it is not per se experiential. Our experiences have nothing to do with our progress. If they have any value, it is in showing you what grossness you've had embedded in you, which is being released by the cleaning or the meditation process. To use a very crude example – when you vomit, you can see what you have eaten before you vomited. Nothing more. It stinks, because it has passed through your system. So the human system really makes everything stink.

You will remember the story I've told you about the guru and his disciple – a boy who wanted to become a *sishya*, a disciple, and the guru said, "Bring me guru dakshina." "What shall I bring you?" He said, "The worst thing on earth that you can find." And the boy went about for three years, finding each thing worse than the other, until one day finally in the toilet, he discovered that his excrement was the filthiest, dirtiest. So, he was going to pick it up, when a voice came, "What are you doing?" "No, no I'm taking you to my guru as guru dakshina" "Why?" "He said, 'Bring the worst thing that you can find on earth,' and voilà, it is here." And then the voice said, "Yesterday, I was chocolate gâteau, I was pizza, I was fromage, and you touched me and I became this. You may decide what is the worst thing on earth." So, the disciple went, the would-be disciple went empty-handed to his guru and fell at his feet. The guru asked, "Where is the guru dakshina?" He said, "Here I am, Master."

So, if experience has any value, it is in showing you what has been in you, the original experiences that created an impression that is being released, very much like when a photograph is developed. The impression of the scene that is recorded on the film is released by the developing process. Here, with cleaning it comes out. Some people experience, some people don't experience. I think it is morbid to try to look and see what is going out of you. I know some people who never bathe and suddenly one day they bathe and say, "Look how much dust I have got on my head." It is morbid. To know what is dirty in us, unacceptable in us, unnecessary in us, is a morbidity which we should avoid. That sometimes we have good experiences, like we are passing through a beautiful scene, is also similarly something we are throwing out of ourselves. Now, if either you hate this or you become attached to that experience, both are going to deepen until they form fresh samskaras. Now, how to translate this into real experience? People say, "Yes, but you know I want some experience to prove to me that the system is really working." It is like a boy of twelve saying, "Daddy, let me vomit a little to see that I have really eaten." "But don't you feel that you have eaten in your stomach? Hasn't your hunger been satisfied?" So, many of these rather peculiar desires still rest in us, though we routinely say the prayer: "Our wishes are putting bar to our advancement."

So, the teaching is very troublesome. If you say, "Oh, most prefects say experiences have no value," but prefects must learn to explain why they have no value, why their only value is in showing you that something has gone. Like when I am moving in a train; a station flashing past me shows that I'm moving in this direction. If the station remains static, it means that I am also static. And if the station goes past me in the opposite way, it means that I am moving backwards. These are only indicators of how fast I am moving. If you cannot see this, then you will see nothing.

So this idea of seeing something, feeling something, is bringing the human perceptions to play on a state of existence which is beyond the human level of existence. It is like trying to measure air with a metre stick. So we are trying to transpose one dimension of experience into another dimension of being, and suffering the consequences and saying, "I feel nothing, I know nothing, I see nothing, Sahaj

Marg is a failure." Whereas the opposite is true: that so long as I can feel something, see something, I am at the lowest level of the spiritual ladder. So abhyasis should be trained to recognise this. And to know that when they continue to know, they are really only at the level of knowing. They have to go to the level of feeling. When they transcend that, they are going to a level where nothing more exists either to be known, or to be felt. That is the real state of progress.

"Then, what is this for? Why should I meditate any more?" Because you have to retain this state. It is like being born and continuing to eat all your life so that you will continue to live. So, at that level of growth, why you continue to meditate is for several reasons. One, because your Master asks you to do it. Second, because you need to keep the fire burning, the state retained without fall. You see there are so many reasons for these things. When we ask ourselves, "Why am I here?", we are asking a very fundamental question – "Why am I here – what am I here for?" Which means I would rather not be here, because people who are happy, healthy and wise, never ask this question. It is only the people who are failures, dropouts, who say, "Why am I here? Why should I suffer so much? I never wanted to be born, I didn't want to be here." You know, it's a crazy life in any case.

So we have to understand many things by doing. Therefore Babuji said, "I teach by letting them do," which is very logical. You learn to bicycle by mounting the bicycle and pedalling. Initially, you may have somebody to hold you so that you don't fall until you develop a sense of balance. Later on, you ride by yourself. You cannot possibly learn how to bicycle from a book of thirteen easy lessons, sold for eight dollars and ninety-nine cents. Nor can you learn to swim by lying on your belly on the floor and moving your hands and legs around. Exercise, but not swimming. So, to master anything, you have to master it by doing it. This is the fundamental aspect of teaching. You can only be taught by being made to do that which you want to learn. But, unfortunately again, commencing with the Greek tradition and the Occidental tradition, we are taught that we can learn something by not doing it, so that later on we can do it.

The cookery book is an exemplary example of this, what I call stupidity. Exact measurement, precise quantities, everything is nice – "take two potatoes, peel them" – peeled! "Boil them in water" – boiled. Then what? And then, they give you a number of ingredients. You don't know which to put first, which to put last. Frying and adding or adding and frying? You learn by experiment. Which cook has ever learned from a book? Therefore, I am always amused when I go for lunch or dinner in one of those Western houses, occasionally when I am invited, and you see half a dozen people pouncing upon that poor lady of the house, "Give me the recipe." As if the recipe will instantly make you a good cook. Recipes are indicators, like if you go down the street, it says, 'Belmont, 0.2 kms,' but you have to walk that 200 metres to get to Belmont. Indicators tell you where a thing is. To get there, you have to go there.

Our books teach us what you can do, how you can do it. But to do it, you have to sit down and do it yourself. So, we have to teach by example, we have to teach by precept – two things. The example is there. Now, if you are just admiring the example and say, "What a wonderful Master I have!" it is not enough. He may be wonderful, but he is wonderful only for himself, not for you. "What a beautiful apple in the store window." Yes, but there is a pane of glass between it and myself. To chew it, I have to first acquire it.

Now, what is the right way of acquiring a spiritual status? The right way is to go to the one whom you deem to be fit enough to give you that state, and obey him. The first teaching, as far as the spiritual systems of knowledge and experience and achievement are concerned, is obedience. There can be no teaching without this condition of obedience being met. It is not only the student who obeys, it is the teacher also, who obeys. The teacher obeys his sense of duty, his need to pass on his knowledge, his achievement, to somebody else. He is obeying his inner impulse to transmit. In short, it is an impulse of generosity, kindness, and above all, love for humanity, which compels him to do what he is doing. There is no other compulsion. It is like you feed your child because you love your child. If I tell you, "You are compelled to feed your child!" you will say, "Nonsense Chari, there is no compulsion. I do it willingly." Yes, but why? Why not the neighbour's child? Because you love your child, you don't love your neighbour's child? "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Yes, Christ said so. He never said love thy neighbour's child as thine own child. But you are not even able to love your neighbour; how can you love your neighbour's child? But, you love your child, therefore, you put your money on it, your love upon it, you sort of mortgage your security and your future on its future.

Between the teacher and the student, there must be this flow of love from the teacher to the student, reciprocated by obedience from the student to the teacher. That the student should love the teacher, is, at least in the beginning, an absolute impossibility. Abhyasis who start off saying, "I want to love the master. Please, Chari, tell me how to do it," are crazy. It is not possible. It is good that it is not possible. And it is good that it will never be possible in the beginning, though it must happen in the end. Because when this symbiosis is created, and He loves, and I obey because He loves me, then all teaching becomes possible, at all levels. If I am going to obey only at the physical level, not with my mental/intellectual level and my innermost levels of my heart, then it is a parody of this relationship. It is a falsity. In a sense, I would say, it is prostitution. It is like a woman giving her body but not her heart.

So there is either a love relationship between the two, or there is only a transaction between the two, and it is unfortunate that you have a school of psychology called 'Transactional Analysis'. It reflects, very perfectly and effectively, the psyche of the moment that prevails in this culture. To me it is a tragedy and a shame that there can be transactions between human beings. So how degraded things appear when you look at them from one way, and how wonderful and efficient they appear when you look at them from another side. Now to look at things from two sides and to develop a balance – that, when I look at clouds from below they look dark, but when I fly above them they are silver on top – is the true sense of balance, is a recognition of the fact that in material life there is good on this side, there is bad on that side of the same thing. That potatoes are wonderful when baked, but they give me gas problems later; that artichokes are very good but they are stupid to eat. Then we come to the real perception that life is made up of two opposites.

Life cannot exist without the interplay of the two opposites. There has to be pain and pleasure. There has to be good and bad, sickness and health, sorrow and misery and ecstasy. And anyone who tries to avoid the one will have to do without the other too. If you seek pleasure you will have pain, there is no question about it. And then, there is no use in rushing to your spiritual guide and saying, "Why this pain?" This is the standard question of human beings, asked from time immemorial. If you are wise enough to understand that like two sides of a coin, the head on one side and the tail on the other, life is made up of a blend of the two extreme opposites, and that you cannot avoid either – there has to be pain, and there has to be pleasure. And it is like tossing a coin – which will come up? Heads? You don't know. It is a gamble. In this sense, life is a gamble.

But the spiritual law also says there is a way of getting out of this. Instead of seeking pleasure, seek pain and there will be pleasure following it. So this idea of asceticism stems from this fundamental belief: that when I deal with one opposite, the other opposite will come, and that is to my good. We seek disease and then take medicine. Take the medicine first and there is no disease. Accept sorrow, and there is only happiness afterwards. So, the human being's ignorance at its worst level of manifestation is in this pleasure-seeking, happiness-seeking life that we are trying to lead. It is doomed to failure. It has nothing to do with God. It has nothing to do with samskaras. It is a fact of nature.

This should be taught in schools. But today's schools only glorify material existence: "Does your father have a car? Oh, BMW, wonderful. And yours? Oh, Volkswagen. Well I hope next year he'll have a BMW too." And the child is made to feel insignificant, you know, less than the other child. Our schools are teaching this. Our society is teaching this. You go to your neighbour and they have a nice oven, and you want a nice oven. They have a nice car, you want a nice car. "Keeping up with the Jones's." "They have a silver teapot? Why, my teapot made of clay is quite good." "No, no, but I must have a silver teapot because they have it." And when something is very expensive, like in Switzerland for example, they say, "Oh, we have good standards. We have the highest standards."

I was appalled, recently driving through Switzerland, to find huge sheets of copper being laid on the roof at the junctions, where tin would have sufficed, because it is going to be covered in any case with the tiles or whatever it is. "No, no but we have the highest standards in the world, Chari." I mean, somebody told it to me, perhaps amused at my ignorance, that I don't know Switzerland is such a wonderful country with such high standards of living that perhaps they will plate it with gold next year. After all, all the wealth of the world is hidden there. Who is going to gripe if you take a couple of tons and coat your roof with it, so long as you can give it back when they want it?

So, this is how our standards of understanding, our sense of values have become totally destroyed. And when we say, "Why do we want expensive things?", as one of our maxims says, "Be simple and in tune with nature," we rebel. Our first instinct is to rebel. "Oh, they come from India, and they have nothing there, only poverty and misery. And these blighters come and tell us to be simple. What do they mean?" "I am used to *matelas* [mattress] Chari, eight inches." "But you have a back problem." "No no, that's not because of the *matelas*. My third vertebrae from the bottom is a little upset, you know. I am having the expert examine it." "And who is your expert?" "He is one of this new breed of therapists." What do they call them? Chiropractors. I once had a back problem myself. And Don Sabourin told me there is a fifth cervical vertebrae expert in Vancouver. (laughter) If it was the fourth or the sixth, he couldn't manage, you know. But of the fifth he is absolutely the expert. (laughter) I mean, this is specialisation at its absurdest limit.

It's like having atomic scientists – one can only deal with the atoms of lead, the other can only deal with the atoms of silver, the third only with the iron atoms. "Oh, he is an 'Fe' specialist." "What is 'Fe'?" "Ferrum, don't you know? Iron." "And you?" "Oh, I am a 'Cu' specialist, Chari." "What is 'Cu'?" "Cuprum." This is knowledge? This is science? Barbarous, stupid, ridiculous, analytically broken into pieces. Today, no specialist knows anything other than his speciality. Therefore, we have this system of medicine, where you go to one man and he sends you to six other people. Because he only knows your stomach, or perhaps the first half of the stomach, and the upper half of the stomach, somebody else will deal with the rest. (laughter) It's not a laughing matter, because in countries where we pay for our medical treatments, like in India, it is enormously expensive. I have a pain in the head, they send me for a chest x-ray. I don't know why. He says, "Well, to make sure there is nothing else wrong." That I am alive and sound is not enough? Then, I go for the chest x-rays, he says, "Chari since you are here, why don't we take an abdominal picture too. Make sure that the intestines are functioning okay." It's all right for societies where you don't pay, where your so-called insurance, or assurances as you say, takes care of everything. What about the poor people who cannot afford even their hair to be examined?

This specialisation is the curse of humanity. But we are taught that specialisation is good. And in the same way, you have love cut up into pieces. Love in the drawing room, love in the bedroom, love outside in the garden, love in a hotel. And we don't know what love really is. This is specialisation. Absurd! That which is whole, which must always be whole is cut up into bits and pieces. And this is exemplified in India in the temple worship, where they take coconuts for prasad. The coconut is offered to the Lord, broken, and the two halves exposed to show you that there is really nothing.

When you break something in two there is really nothing. When you break a heart, you don't have two broken halves. There is no heart left. This must be very beautifully and clearly understood – that, you can break a stone into two pieces, but that the heart cannot be broken into two pieces. Either it is whole, or it doesn't exist at all. Therefore you find people who have a heart, and you find heartless people. The physiological heart may be there, but it is only an organ, a pump, beating away. It's nothing more.

Now, who is going to teach us all this? Where are we going to learn it? How are we going to learn it? And how are we going to apply it in our lives? It's no use learning something which I don't have to apply, or which I cannot apply, or which I will never apply in my life. This is another tragedy of education, that we are taught so many things which we never use.

When I was first fascinated with these pocket computers, these calculators, I went through the leaflet of a particular company in India which makes them. And I made the imbecilic mistake of buying the most complicated one. It had all the calculations, you know, integral calculus, how to calculate electrical things, mechanical things, chemical things. And all that I ever did on it was to play with it and prove to myself that thirty times thirty is really nine hundred. (laughter) Because, I didn't know how to use the other functions available on that calculator. Now what was the need for it? I could have had one free, one of these card calculators, you know, which does the four necessary and basic functions: addition, multiplication, subtraction and division. But, I had to prove to myself that I am a great genius. And I bought the most expensive calculator on the market. This is what all of us do. We buy the most expensive car just to prove to ourselves that we are great.

Now when we say in Sahaj Marg, "Be simple and in tune with nature," we don't really understand it. We immediately think it means no toilet but going out into the fields, cold water bath – it is not that. Simplicity – in tune with your environment. After all, your forefathers, not that long ago, didn't have heating in the house, did not have cars, and went about on bullock carts, or horse carts perhaps. In this village, they still do it.

Why do you think civilisation means complication of life? Why should it be so? On the contrary, civilisation really means 'to be civil'. Be civil to yourself, respect yourself, understand yourself, be honest with yourself, and extend the same generosity of thought and convention to others around you – civil behaviour. When you meet somebody, don't bark like a dog, "Yes, what do you want?" "Yes, *s'il vous plaît* [please], can I be of assistance to you?" This is civilisation.

Civilisation is not in a nation's cars and atomic plants. They are destructive. You know that it's a well known truth that more people are killed by car accidents than even by cancer. But what is the use? You try to tell them, they will say, "Well, this fakir from India will only teach us this. The blighter doesn't have a car. He doesn't have a house. He eats with his fingers. Mama mia! You know he doesn't even know which hand to hold the fork in. And he has the cheek and temerity to come and teach us culture?" And of course the last item of culture is that unmentionable thing in the toilet, the paper. And we are amused when we read in some books that in Russia they have an enormous shortage of toilet paper. In India it wouldn't matter at all. We never think of toilet paper. It's one item that we do without very comfortably, very hygienically, too.

Now, this is the perversion of culture, cultural values, cultural requirements. And when we are taught 'be simple' – be simple in your dress, simple in your manners, simple in your education, simple in your way of expression – it goes against the grain because we have had centuries of wrong education, mis-education.

Now I am not suggesting that it will take centuries to correct the fault of centuries. Any fault can be corrected in a moment. You may have gone a hundred miles in the wrong direction, but you have only to turn your car around to be in the right direction again. You may have been sleepless for ten nights, but one night of sleep is enough. You may have fasted for twenty-three days, but the next meal will fill your stomach and fulfil your hunger. Nature is very magnanimous and generous in enabling us to correct our mistakes in an instant of time, even if that mistake has been continued over centuries of ignorance and superstition. But this enormous generosity of Nature, its love for us, we don't use.

So, education must teach us this too. Otherwise, we have what you so beautifully call in French, *culpabilité* [guilt]. Yes, but when I can correct all the mistakes of my life in an instant of what, not confession in church – because confession demeans us, makes us confess something, it is obnoxious to the human psyche – but in a moment's repentance, "Lord, I shall not do this again," it's finished.

Repentance, according to Sahaj Marg is a total intention, which is a determination not to repeat that mistake again. It is nothing more. You don't have to go on your knees before somebody, and be pardoned: "In the name of the Father and the Holy Ghost." Who is he to pardon me? God must pardon me. And where is this God? It is in myself. So, who must pardon me? I must pardon myself. If I cannot, I cannot pardon anybody else. And how can I pardon myself? Well, I just have to say, "The whole chapter is closed. Here is a new page. I start life all over again, from this instant in time." It's finished. There is no more guilt, there is no more beating the breast, no more continuing on the same path without changing direction, continuing to do the same things again and again, feeling more and more guilty, until we end up a mess.

But religion continues this absolute falsity of saying that God has to come and redeem you because there is a God outside, not inside. He is in a church or in a temple, not within me. He is in heaven, not on earth. Therefore this culpability continues. A stage comes when we cannot go to church any more, because we feel too culpable. There's a church and we start reviling the church, and we say, "Well, darn it, what is this church for?" And we become really irreligious and atheistic. Now, it is religion which drives you away from itself.

On the contrary, we should be able to bring people nearer us, and say, "My brother, my sister, don't worry about what you have done. It is in the past. It cannot be changed. The past is past. Forget it, once and for all. From today, are you willing to turn over a new page in your existence, and to lead a new life?" "Yes! *C'est tout* [That's all]." This is the easiest thing. It is the thing, which liberates you from any feeling of guilt for the past whether wantonly or un-wantonly done. I think it is the first and perhaps the greatest liberation – that I don't have to feel guilty about anything. But this teaching is not available. We are always being preached at: "Eternal hell; sulfurous fumes." What is all this nonsense? If man cannot be redeemed by God, that God is useless to me. If He is outside myself, certainly He will lack that capacity. It is like knowledge in books. What is the use? I must have that knowledge in myself to do something with it. The air that another man breathes is of no use to me. I must be able to breathe.

So, the whole value, the whole thrust of a spiritual education is: Is it in you? A God outside – He may be the most powerful God, but he is of no use to me. It is sufficient if I have Him in his atomic presence within me. Because his atomic presence is no less and no more than his super-cosmic presence. It is Himself.

So, this is what spirituality teaches. No god. No names of gods. No presence of gods. He is in me. I have to recognise this fact. I have to remove the grossness that is surrounding it, like removing the cover over a lamp, and allow Him to manifest His presence there. And there He is. You are now a changed person. You are no longer a person in that sense, you are a container for divinity which allows that divinity to flow out of you in all directions. Therefore, you are a divinised person.

So, these are the things that we have got to learn, and they are very important lessons. They can be learned only by doing. There is no use in somebody telling you, "God is within you," until you find that old fellow sitting there. There is no use in cheating and saying, "Yes, I feel His presence." It is no use in feeling His presence outside. I can feel the breeze outside me easily, but am I able to feel the breeze in my lungs? If not, I am dead. Food outside me is no use. Air outside me is no use. Water outside me is no use. The ultimate useless thing is God Himself – if He is outside me. In me, He is my friend, He is my self, eventually He is me.

So I hope you will consider all these aspects of spirituality and forget the needs of the intellect, and that you are a scientist or an intellectual person, and all this blah-blah-blah of the western culture. It is destroying human beings in their very beginning. And for heaven's sake don't call yourself anything. Because if you are that, you are nothing else. One who must be all must be nothing. It's difficult to understand; but the Hindu philosophy, which I think is the most sublime, says, "He who has nothing has everything. He who has something, only has that something."

Thank you.

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Experience Is The Greatest Teacher

I will try to deal from personal experience. As I told you on the first day, I am not a scholar, so I cannot give you any scholarly discourses. But in the course of my life I have found that experience is the greatest teacher. I am not now referring to spiritual experience about which I spoke yesterday – the experience of the coming out of (the release of) samskaras in your inner self – that has no teaching value. But, experience of life – the joys, the sufferings, these things have a great deal to teach. And also in the search for knowledge there are certain truths that we find as we go on. And, one of the first truths is that as we develop, it is more and more difficult to find that which we want. You must understand this – that, as we develop it is more and more difficult to find what we want, whether it is knowledge, or guidance in practice.

At the lowest level you can find knowledge in any book. For instance you take children's books. 'A-B-

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C-D' – you will find in hundreds of books; it doesn't really matter what you buy. It's a question of taste, it's a question of colour, it's a question of the smell of the paper I suppose, the binding – attractively bound, attractively presented, so that it will capture the children's attention. But the 'A-B-C-D' is the same. So, in a real sense, it doesn't matter what you buy, so long as it has the alphabet. Whether 'A' is for an apple, or 'A' is for an ass, it doesn't really matter. 'A' is for both. You all remember that famous song: "Do Re Mi Fa – Do, a deer; Mi, a name, I call myself; Fa, a long distance to go." But they are not really "Doe – a deer," and "Me – my name," and "Far – a long, long way to go." They are used to train the child to sing.

In spirituality, this truth is of paramount importance. At the lowest level, you can find the teaching that you want anywhere. I have this little difficulty with understanding one of Shakespeare's references where he says, "Books in brooks, sermons in stones, knowledge in everything." Yes. But what books in brooks? What sermons in stones? That which is basic and so common, that you can find it anywhere and yet contains wisdom – only the wise can extract that wisdom out of it. That which is very rare and is all wisdom, only the wise can find it. It is well understood that if you read a book, very often there is one sentence or one paragraph, which is of value to you. That's why we underline books, or mark them. It is like a whole field of corn – ten hectares, and when you harvest it, you put all the corn in a few bags and take them away in your car. So, we have to know where to find, what to find, how to find. And having found it, what to do with it. Therefore, teaching has to be at several levels, as I said.

Now, when we are searching we have no guidance. There is something in us, which intuitively guides us in the right direction. When we start off life we don't have guides. Now if I need a teacher to tell me where to find a teacher, that would be obviously absurd. I cannot have a teacher to show me a teacher. I cannot have a lover to send me to another lover. If this is a lover, it is enough. If it is not, he is not going to show me, or she is not going to show me, where I can find another lover. So if you look at it that way, the first shot must hit the target – which is a very rare thing. You must be a super shot. You must know how to aim. You must know where the target really is, what you are aiming for. So this whole question of 'seek and find' is very difficult to understand, to realise.

And if we spend our life reading books, and trying to get knowledge through books, guidance through books, we may end up as intellectuals, as philosophers, but certainly not as spiritual people. I am very emphatic about this: that you can certainly never be a spiritual person by reading books alone. This is the fault of the systems prevailing in the various parts of the world, that we are taught to look into books, "If you don't know the meaning of a word, look in the dictionary."

Now, I want to tell you a personal experience. Somebody presented me with one of these electronic dictionaries. But I could not find in it one single word that I wanted. It is all right for the tyro in language, who knows probably six hundred words and wants to find out the other words. For him, it's useful. But for a developed person to find that which he wants, for example, for a PhD in English or English Literature – if he wants an electronic dictionary, it is quite obvious that most of it will be useless to him because he knows all of it. And it is also quite possible that the few words that he wants to refer to will not be in it. Therefore, the difficulty of finding what you want as you develop increases. It does not decrease.

Now, research people must understand this very exactly. Some people think that the more you do research, the easier research becomes. On the contrary, it should become more and more difficult. I was amused to read the question of prime numbers for instance. I read somewhere that a third generation computer took three and a half years to find the next unknown prime number. And it is quite possible that the fourth generation computer will take forty years to find the next higher prime number. Because the next prime number will contain practically everything, you know, and will be divisible. You have to find something that will not be divisible by anything that has been existing so far. And that is more and more difficult.

If you look at it this way, can you find the last prime number? First of all, it doesn't exist. In an infinite series there is no last number. Therefore, there cannot be a last prime number. Now I consider such research a waste of time, money, expenditure. What on earth is the use of knowing the next prime number? To whom is it beneficial? It is a waste of computers. It is a waste of mathematicians. It is a waste of time. It's a waste of money – taxpayer's money. Research must be oriented in such a fashion that it is productive of human good will, of human good. Otherwise, we have a lot of research going on today which is going to destroy the human race. But yet, we are proud of it.

When we travel by the TGV, we look outside. We see the atomic reactors, we see the CERN facilities for rotating atoms around a circle, and we are very pleased. We are very happy. "Look what we have. Do you have this sort of thing in India, Chari?" Not at all. I'm not sorry, I'm proud that we don't have such things, because they are essentially destructive forces. Is it good to have good forces? Sahaj Marg says no. Because you should not make the mistake of thinking that – "All right, we'll throw this away, we'll get some good reactors." There is no such thing as a good reactor or a bad reactor. There is no such thing as a good rifle or a bad rifle. Both are there to kill. One may kill you more effectively, more efficiently, more quickly. That's about all.

So, force, the idea of force, is abhorrent to Sahaj Marg; power is abhorrent to Sahaj Marg. Here, we deal with forceless force, powerless power. In fact, the whole Sahaj Marg philosophy is full of such contradictory usages. How to understand this? How to understand what is forceless force? Or if you want to translate it into mundane life, how to understand loveless love? It's a very necessary thing to be understood by at least our youth. You see, the elder generation is spoiled.

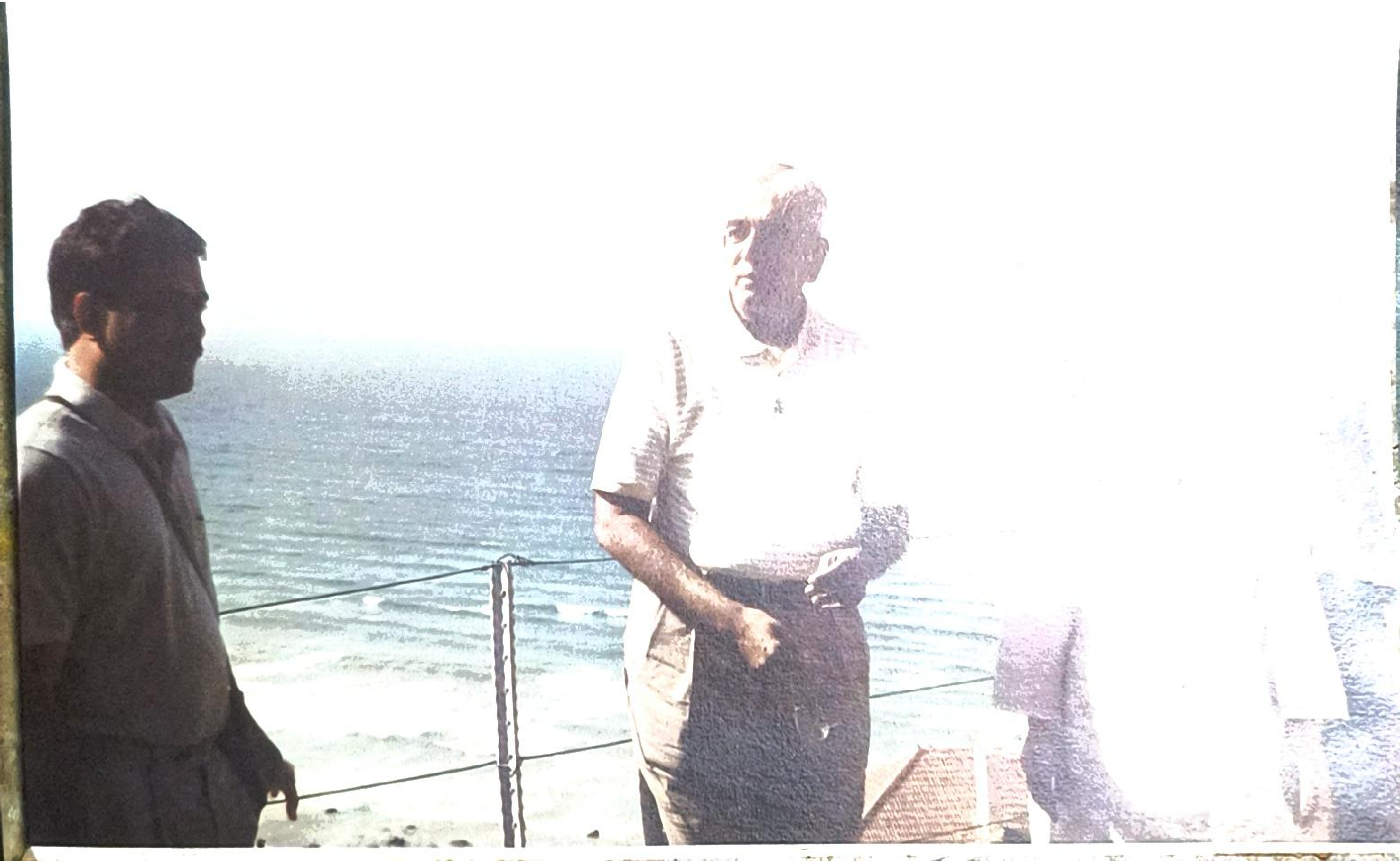
What is loveless love? It means the perfection of love, the ennobling of love, to a state where the common understanding of love is no more existing, only the ultimate transcendental reality of love is existing. It's easy to understand what loveless love must be. But people will say, "But how can loveless love be really love, Chari?" Yes, it is. That is the only real love. If you bring it down to its, shall we say, material context, physical context (as I said once before), one four letter word changes into another four letter word: l-o-v-e becomes l-u-s-t. Now, how can lust be love?

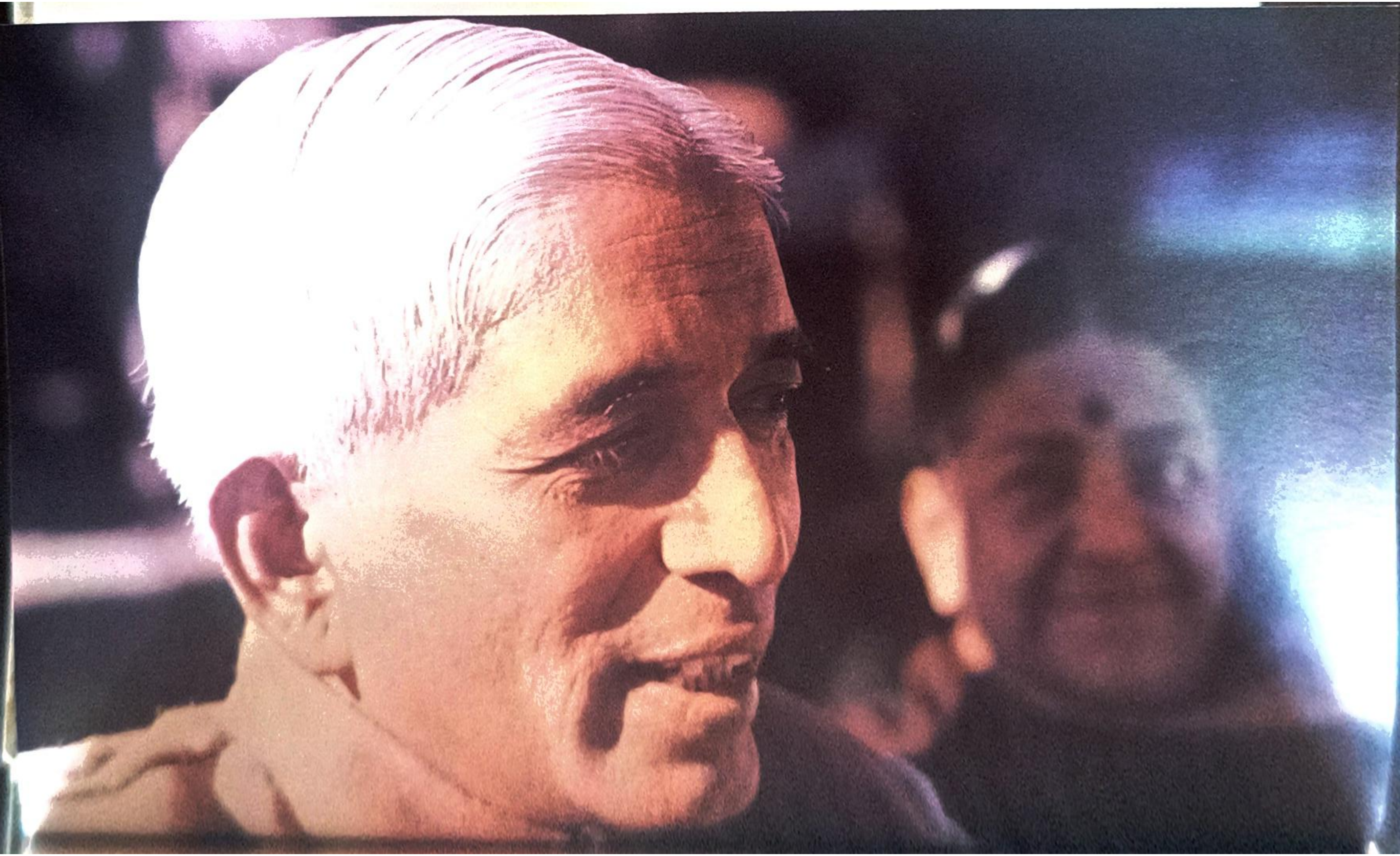
So, it is possible to understand the idea of a loveless love, if we are willing to understand. "No, no, that is all for philosophers, for sixty-five-year-old people." But, what about the young people? Yes, love is the same for the young as for the old. Food is the same for both. Air is the same for both. Life is the same for both. There is no such thing as a young life and an old life, only the body is young or old. Life is always eternal; it has no age. So how can the fundamental values, the fundamental verities, the fundamental truths, differ according to age? Can the idea of justice change with age? If you rob an eight-year-old boy, can you tell the court, "I only robbed an eight-year-old boy, it cannot be robbery." You cannot say it.

So the fundamental values are the same for all. If they have no relevance to age and sex, they cannot have relevance to race, to culture, to tradition. You cannot have different moral conceptions in different religions. It only means they are not really religions. They are only codes.

Now this you have to understand with your heart, because if you try to understand with your body, the body will say, "Nonsense, this is love. That, we shall come to when we are seventy, when this is no more possible." But, that is not negation, that is not renunciation, that is not understanding. It is like a robber saying, "I can no longer rob; therefore I have renounced robbery." It is when you *can* do something that you have to renounce it. A beggar cannot say, "I have renounced money. No, no, I have renounced money." He is a beggar, he has always been a beggar. Renunciation must always come from one who has something to give up. Now, it does not mean that we should immediately jump into our cars and start hunting around for things which we have never done so that we can do them and then renounce them. The idea has to be understood. That, when I say I have stopped telling lies, it means I told lies. It does not mean I should start telling lies, and then stop telling lies. For one who has never told anything but the truth, even the idea of a lie will be confusing. He will not be able to understand what a lie is.

So, we start off with an innocence that is native to the human being, natural to the human being. We call it, in all languages I think, child-like innocence. Not childish, but child-like. Why child-like innocence? Because for the child, there are no opposites, it exists, it reacts. A child never tells lies until we teach it to tell lies. A child never feels guilty until we make it feel guilty. It drops an egg, and it splatters, and the yolk is all over the carpet. And you say, "What have you done?" The child begins to feel guilty. If an elderly person dropped a glass of whiskey and it went on the carpet, you cannot blame him. "Oh it doesn't matter, *ça va*." This is hypocrisy. You have one attitude for the child, one attitude for yourself, one attitude for your guest, one for somebody you hate, one for somebody you love. This is precisely disintegration of character. If people are schizophrenic, paranoid, it is because we cultivate this in ourselves by our own behaviour, adopting different attitudes towards different people, different situations. And end up not knowing which





is the real me. And then I am in trouble. I have to go to the psychiatrists.

In yoga we try to bring back the whole thing – reintegration of character. When there is only one person, he reacts in the same way to everything. It's like a telescope. Whoever looks through it, it shows the same thing. How can the telescope show you different things? One for the white man, one for the black man; one for the rich man, one for the poor man – it doesn't exist. Anybody who looks at the moon sees the same moon. So, from a disintegrated, diversified, lost multiplicity of characters, we try to bring them back together by meditating on the inner self, which is essentially a unity. It cannot be anything else. Why meditate? This is one of the reasons. In my external life I am many things, I am many persons. In my inner life I am one. By meditating on Him, I learn, I train myself to slowly become one personality again.

Now, what is the truth of that one personality? What is the value of becoming a single entity, a single personality, a single person? Who can say 'I'? Now we have no right to say 'I,' we have to say 'I's, because we have many 'I's – something to the husband, something to the lover, something to the father, something to the mother. Therefore, we are bewildered more than anybody else. All bewilderment is personal. All feeling of being lost is personal. A child feels lost because it doesn't know where it is. We feel lost because we are in too many places, in too many situations, with too many things and persons, and we really don't know where we are. Therefore we say, "I am lost. I don't know where I am." So, we have to bring all this back together.

In bringing this back together, medicine cannot help, therapy cannot help, temples cannot help, places of worship cannot help. Because that is yet one more facet of my existence, what we call the religious aspect of my self. For the nonce! For the time being! I go there, pray on my knees, or on my back, or whatever it is, assume that I have been pardoned, bring back *prasad* if it is India and think, well everything is okay. But, inside, there is this gnawing doubt. Have I really achieved anything by going to that place of worship? If we have really achieved something, we would not go back to that place a second time. I mean this is so obvious that you don't have to say it. Why should we go back again and again? Because the first visit was useless, it is followed by the second visit. That is useless, so we go back for the third time. And ultimately when we are dead, we are put in a coffin and taken in procession to that same church where we were born and baptised. And again, relying on somebody who pretends to be a priest and who says some things, and we are interred with our bones – "There lies Caesar."

So, we may be beginning our life in a place of worship. If you end it there, your life has been a total waste, a lie. This is the first fact of religion. He who ends his life where he began it, has not lived. If he has not lived, he was dead all along. Therefore, he never felt anything during life. There was nothing to either enjoy or suffer. He lived like an automaton, like a robot, pushed by his samskaras into a semblance of a living being.

The toys are wound up by keys, which turn springs, or are powered by batteries. Children sometimes find a very realistic gorilla for instance, powered by four batteries. And it makes sounds and its eyes are blinking. Children are afraid. They won't accept such a toy. Where does this fear come from? It is from the samskara. And this is so life-like. So we are all life-like semblances of living realities.

The body is created by nature, the motivating force being our samskaras, pushing us hither and thither in whichever direction they push. And we have this beautiful, but awfully negative idea that we are alive. We are no more alive than we shall be when we are dead. Therefore, the Vedic *sloka*, one of the most famous Vedic slokas, says, *uthishtatha* – arise, *jagritha* – awake. Why should we awake if I am already awake? I mean nobody would go and call somebody who has woken up and say, "Please wake up". You wouldn't do it as an ordinary human being pushed by his samskaras as a toy of nature, much less as some divine personality. Therefore the truth is – we are really asleep. We are like sleepwalkers, people who walk in their sleep – somnambulists. They are walking, they are muttering things, they are speaking, they are opening doors, they are closing doors, but they don't know what is happening. Next morning you tell them that they were doing all this. They say, "For heaven's sake, I couldn't be doing that."

So the first realisation we have to understand, accept, however it may hurt our egos, is that we are dead persons pushed by samskaras. They motivate us into doing what we are doing, and to not do what we should be doing. And therefore, the first ritual, or the first reality of that ritual, is to start a yogic process. "Where to find a guru? Where to find a system? There are so many." Well, let your intuition guide you. As Babuji Maharaj has said, "If you make a sincere prayer that, 'I may be guided to the right person,' the guru will come to your door." And I can testify to this from personal experience.

I started meditating when I was probably sixteen or seventeen years old, all by myself, from books. Because I had a natural, I don't know, I can't call it craving, it's too big a word, shall we say – an affection. And I used to do all sorts of funny things – hatha yoga, pranayama, asanas. I was something of an admired person in my family because nobody else did it. But it was all false. It was futile. That which does not yield fruit is a barren tree. It may have wonderful foliage, a beautiful canopy, a lovely trunk, beautiful roots. But did it yield? If it did not yield, it is a barren tree. So, an effort which does not produce anything is a waste of time. All my efforts produced something, in that eventually my Master came to me. Now that is the grace of the Master. And perhaps, if one can be so conscious of it, or allowed to say it – a fruit of my sincerity in my search. Otherwise, we go around like children on these roundabouts – going round and round, a lot of speed, a lot of movement, but there all the time.

Most of us are moving like this, thinking like this, thinking round and round a problem, so that from whichever aspect you look at it – the same thing. Like we see the same face of the moon all the time. It's turning around us, we are turning around ourselves, the whole thing is going round the solar system. And in the grand vision of the universe, even our galaxy is in movement. But yet, I see only the same face of the moon all the time. And people on the moon, on that side only will see me. The other side will never see us.

So, this funny thing – we are going round and round our problems in the same way. Therefore, we see the same thing all the time. We think we are thinking, but it produces no results. We are cogitating – no result. We are meditating – no result because you are going round and round. Now this round and round you know, we are not *tournesols* [sunflowers] that you keep moving with the sun. We have to go straight. Round and round is useless. Straight will produce something – if at least to tell you that you are going away from the goal and not towards the goal.

Now how to find this straight way? Somebody must say – "This is the straight way." As I often tell young boys in India, if you come to Europe and you tell him, "You see there, that church on the left? That's where you have to go." And if I turn left on the highway, I may end up in Dijon or Marseilles. Because here, to go left, you have to often turn right and go a full circle round, and then come back into some other direction, take another highway. There, turn right , which is one kilometre from where I see it, but for which I have to travel twelve kilometres by car. Modern technology is very good. High tech is superb, but I am taken more and more away from my destination by these. And this highway business is a very distinct example of this for me. I don't know whether it will appeal to you. You will only say, "This is an ignorant Indian who only can turn left and not right. He doesn't know how to go left by turning right." Thank heavens that I can still turn left and go left. Otherwise it will be like *Alice in Wonderland*, ending up where I don't want to end up, finding empty teacups and dormice in them – all sorts of funny things. So we have to find, in such a situation especially, we need a guide.

In simple societies, where everything is still simple – where life is simple, where the goal is simple because there is only one goal, it is easy to find guidance. In a complex society, where turning left may mean going back and coming all the way again, after taking several turns in all directions, you will definitely need a guide. That is why in India we have no road maps. Here, you have lovely road maps. Even I buy them by the dozen all the time. I don't know what I will do with them, but I am fascinated with road maps. At home I have a bunch of them – for Spain, for Portugal, for Italy. I assume, or pretend, that someday I will be going all alone and I will need these road maps. They are so glossy, so beautifully printed – *Bartholomew*'s road maps. And I open them, and I fall a prey to this eight-franc business or thirty-five-franc business, buy one more, and put it away in my library.

He who does not need guidance should not seek guidance – first law. He who needs guidance must seek guidance – second law. Third law – Babuji Maharaj said, "Having found the guide, tie him to yourself with ropes of steel, so that you can never be parted." Absolute law. So, we have to look. We have to look very hard. We have to look inside, because essentially the real guide is inside. The Master is inside. God is inside. Therefore, to go out to look for him, whether in temples or other places of worship is a lie against my native intelligence which says, "Fool, He is here. Why are you going outside?" If He is here, why should I seek Him outside? If I know my wife is in the kitchen cooking for me, I don't go out and look for her in the garden. If I know my child is sleeping in the cradle, I don't go to school and look for him. "*Je cherche mon fils*." "*Pourquoi?*" "No, no, I just search, you know." "Yes, but your son is at home. You know it." "Yes, but you know there is a fun in searching. I also take a little walk, it helps my digestion." This is the way we fool ourselves. People who have a master still go around finding or trying to find other masters. Go to the Buddhists, go to Tao-te-ching, go to Shiatzu, go to I don't know what else. Make a mess of themselves and come back to their original master. Now he has to put together the broken pieces all over again. We find them in plenty in our satsangh. Of such people Christ said, "Ye of little faith." Because it is faith that is lacking.

Now, how are you going to test a master when you find him? By what standards will you test him? Can you adopt a standard of measurement? Can he be weighed in kilograms, or measured in metres? Or his love taken in gallons? If your inner intuition says you are with the right fellow, stick to him until you are capable of saying, "Yes, he is the right person." That answer also comes from inside. First, it says, "Yes, it looks as if this is the fellow I need." Later, the voice says, "It looks more as if he is the person I need." Finally it says, "He is." And then one day if you are successful in your search, you can let the outer Master go, and turn within, because He is there. He has always been there. It is His reflection you see outside.

So, essentially, we have to trust ourselves. In my search, if I depend on the master to prove to me that he is the right master, or for someone else to tell me he is the right master for me, I am making the same mistake as when I go to a restaurant and some Frenchman orders *escargot* [cooked snails] for me because it's a wonderful thing. He likes what he likes. You know, like when you have a dog, and it's very happy with you, it will bring you a bone. That which it likes best it brings and puts at your feet. But you don't immediately take it up and start chewing, and say, "Fido, wonderful gift you have brought me." We accept it, but we don't use it. Because that is its love. I must show my love in taking it and patting it on the head and saying, "Ah, wonderful." And then when it is not looking, I throw it out, or bury it in the garden so that it can find it again and bring it back to me. In the same way, children bring snails, they bring earthworms, butterflies. We see the love it brings, accept the love, but not the gift. Here we accept the gift but there is no love behind it, in most cases. When will you know the difference? When having taken the gift, you are unable to throw it away, that shows there was love behind it.

So these are commonplace tests, which your inner intuition should tell you how to apply. If the moment they come, and you don't even open it, "Oh, it's okay you know, put it away," even your instinct tells you that it was nothing. Like they say, women know that the more expensive the gift that the husband brings, the more guilt he is trying to hide behind it. Women know this intuitively. Men know it too. But women's intuition is made much of. I don't think men are less intuitive, but anyway, that's not the question here. So, when my intuition tells me this fellow is possibly the good fellow who can guide me, accept him. Then judge by performance.

"Am I progressing?" Now, before you ask yourself this question, there is a second question you should have asked first, "Am I doing that which he tells me to do?" Because, if you are not doing it, there can be no progress, and there is no use in blaming the guru for it. "Am I doing that which I am supposed to do? Am I refraining from doing those things which I'm not supposed to do?" In short, in brief, "Am I obedient?" If I am obedient, totally obedient, and after three months, four months, five months, I see nothing in myself, no change in myself, then run away from that fellow. He is useless, and you should have nothing more to do with him. It doesn't take very long – a few months, six months, eight months, no more. If then you find there is some change in yourself, continue, because you cannot judge the amount of change, the quantum of change that should take place in a stipulated period of time, because you don't know what spirituality is, what are the dangers inherent in superlative development, especially in Sahaj Marg, where Babuji Maharaj has said that if too much is given it can shatter your nerves. The whole nervous system can be shattered.

But change you must perceive. If you are obedient, if you have practised sincerely, and if that change is lacking, then change your guru. But if you have been obedient and a sincere practicant of the system, and you find some change in yourself, then continue. Continue with more devotion to the practice. And then you will find that this is a sort of progressive thing. That every additional incremental change is much more than the previous increment of change. It is an exponential growth as they say in mathematics. Not two plus two plus two plus two, but two plus four plus sixteen plus two hundred and fifty-six. That is how it goes in spirituality, and it must go like that. Babuji Maharaj said, "Just turn your head from here to here, and you will find Him waiting there." And, if you don't find Him it is because you have not looked! You only turned from Jacky to Marie-Anne, and found Jacky here and Marie-Anne there, and then said, "Where is He?" You never looked for Him!

So, the essence of the Master, the essence of the teaching of the Master, the purpose of his teaching, is to teach you to find Him who doesn't exist in the physical form, using His physical form as something of a guide for you to recognise Him by when you see Him inside. Not recognise in the conventional sense, but, like you recognise, for instance, a charlotte [cake]. If somebody is making it, "Ah-ha, a charlotte." You can understand it. Pizza is cooking, I can tell you what pizza it is. I don't need to see it and to taste it. The smell is enough. This is a gastronomic expertise. But we must develop this expertise into a spiritual expertise. That wherever I see Him, in whichever form He appears, I must be able to recognise Him.

Now this is unfortunately lacking. I have found Babuji Maharaj in certain situations where no abhyasi recognised him. They only saw him when he was sitting in his chair giving sittings. If he changed his dress and walked on the streets, I have seen abhyasis passing by him without even noticing him. Then because I am better known than he was, I mean in a worldly way, they saw me and then looked at Babuji, and said "Babuji, Babuji, Babuji, Babuji." If you cannot recognise your master, what is the use?

Therefore, the heart must be used to create the reality which is within, to allow it to flow out of you, to create the master outside of you. Recognise him when you see him. Accept him, bind him to yourself. Use him, mercilessly use him. But only for spirituality. I use chillies only where I need chillies. I don't make ice cream with chillies – "Oh no, chillies are good. Put a couple of them in the ice cream. Put a few of them in the wine." It doesn't exist. Everything has its purpose. And for that purpose, it is excellent. The Master has a purpose. If you use Him for that purpose your life will be full of excellence.

Thank you.

4

Religion & Spirituality — I

There is one more truth that Babuji Maharaj taught me about teachers and students: a real teacher continues to learn all his life. This may sound something rather strange, but a teacher who has stopped learning is unfit to continue to be a teacher. Students can stop learning, because often we learn for a purpose. We study engineering to become engineers. We study medicine to become doctors. But even there, the good ones continue to learn all their lives, learn from the experience of others, learn from their own experience. One must understand that books are only fossilised experiences of the earlier generations, and that they are as valuable as fossils are to the present generation.

It is perhaps the genius of mankind that because we have mastered speech thousands of years back, and later on we learned to write, and later on to print, we are able to preserve the experience of the past, so that

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it is available to the present generation. But to think that that past is something sacred, or has the authority of something other than just the experience of those who wrote those books, would again be absurd. This is no less true of religious experience.

All religious texts all over the world are nothing more than the statements of the experiences of the great persons of the past, the personalities of the past, the saints of the past. What they experienced, they wrote about. Based on their experience, they gave us some guidelines on how to live our lives. They should be treated as guidelines, not as rigid laws or the testaments into which they have become very much a process of fossilisation; becoming stone – petrification. If you have the best watermelon from seventy-seven million years ago in the form of a fossil, it is no good. We can say, "Yes, it only shows that watermelons existed seventy-seven million years ago." Similarly the great truths of the past embodied in these texts prove to us there were spiritual persons who did have experiences, and who were kind enough to write them down for our sake, for our use, but we should use them only if they are useful to us today.

So when we study these old texts, we should be very careful to evaluate their value in the current epoch in which we are alive, to assess their relevance to the ways in which we exist, and, most importantly, to test their validity in raising up to certain levels of spiritual heights. For instance, if our forefathers made fire by rubbing two sticks together, or the tinder and flint, we wouldn't duplicate it today. But yet, in the cigarette lighter of say fifteen years ago it was done. You had a flint, you had a wick. Friction was used to create the same thing. Principles are there, but the way in which they are applied changes. So, to go by the book as they say, to swear by the book, to follow the book, there is this danger that we will remain hooked to the past, unliberated from even our past. How can we be liberated in the present if we are not even going to be liberated from the past?

I think addiction to past frames of reference, past knowledge, past experience, is some sort of a samskara of the intellect. All samskaras are the same. So when we have this tradition and this ritual of following the past: "Somebody said it some time ago, somebody said it two thousand years ago, somebody said it ten thousand years ago," age does not make anything better. Antiques you may collect because you have given them an artificial value. I don't think that they are in themselves valuable. But because it is rare, because it is old, we collect them. We create a value for them, very much like a piece of paper printed by a government has a value. It is a fictional valuation. And the price is whatever we choose to pay for it. If something is very rare, like the 'half-penny black' in stamps, maybe one or two in the whole world, it can sell for three hundred thousand dollars, three million dollars, maybe twenty million dollars some time in the future. It only goes from bank vault to bank vault. Nobody ever sees it. Nobody ever uses it for centuries. Yet, it is gaining in value. Once I read a story, which was called *The Sleeper Awakes*, about a man who was interested in time travel and mastered it. So he went back three centuries into the past, invested a sum of money in the bank in that period, and put himself to sleep. Three hundred years later when he woke up, he was the owner of the whole world. Because that investment of three hundred years ago had grown and grown and grown.

Now that is a fiction. But we do have something, which grows like that from the past, growing and growing and growing because of the interest we accumulate. And that is our samskara. And the interest that is multiplying is the interest that we take in our samskaras.

Now, you can rebel and say, "How can I take interest in my samskara?" Yes, because when the samskara is making you do something, and you take interest in that, and it forms some more impression upon you, and that solidifies, it becomes a bigger samskara. The capital has indeed been added onto by the interest. It's a very strange law that the law of economics works too in spirituality, but works against us. So we should not take interest in certain things, but we should take interest in certain other things.

So, coming back to this business of the past and its hold upon us, why we are held on to them is due to several different reasons. The first is our own reverence. We may not love our grandfather, but we do what he did. We don't love our great-grandfather. Perhaps we don't even know his name. But, because he did it, my grandfather did it. Because he did it, my father did it. Because they all did it, I do it. And what do I do? I ritualise my life. So, generation after generation these original truths become more and more solid, more and more ritualistic, with less and less meaning in them, less and less of content in them, less and less of effectiveness in them, until we have rituals which are meaningless, with no effect, but which bind us by their force and their power which *we* give to them. This is itself a samskara.

Now there is a great story, which perhaps I have already told you, about the value of a *shastra*. A shastra is a religious text or a body of teaching. This story concerns one guru who had his own guru. This junior guru was going to meet his senior guru. And just when he arrived at his house, the senior guru walked out, circumambulated the junior guru three times, prostrated before him, put his head on his feet in obeisance, as we say in English, and went into the house and started lecturing to his disciples. The disciples were shocked. How can the senior guru prostrate before the junior guru, his own disciple? So they asked the junior fellow, "How is this possible? Your master coming and falling before you like this?" So this man answered, "A guru can do anything, he is the master." They were not satisfied. So they went to the senior guru inside, and they said, "Master, you did this to your own disciple, who is our spiritual brother. How could you do this?" He said, "Oh, did I do it? I didn't do it." They said, "No, no. But we saw you doing it." Then he said, "Oh, I saw my guru there. So it was natural for me to go around him three times, and fall at his feet, and touch my head with his feet." So they said, "This fellow is also bluffing, let us go back to the junior fellow." They went back to the junior fellow and said, "Whatever it is, you said the Master can do anything, but is it not against the shastra? Is it not against the spiritual law, the religious law?" That man said a great truth. He said, "When you have a living master, shastra has no meaning. He is the creator of shastra for your existence."

You see, it is a great truth. But if you only have the old texts and no guru, you have no choice but to follow the texts. But then the texts don't speak to us. There is no intercommunication. They are only printed words. Often we don't know the language. Generally we don't know their meaning. We don't know the archaic meaning of what they meant – old Greek, old Latin, old Persian, old Hebrew, old Sanskrit. Who knows these languages? So we start memorising them and repeating them – "Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread," etc., etc.,

etc., and think that we have prayed, that our spiritual duty to God and to ourselves is over. But we remain as miserable as we were before the prayer, before all the prayers we have been doing for years and years and years.

So this is how texts defeat our purpose. But then they were written for a time, for a special epoch of the past, when this relevance was there to that period. But we are living in a different time, in a different world, under different circumstances. Therefore Babuji Maharaj said, "Lalaji rediscovered Sahaj Marg, and moulded it to the needs of the time." It is essential to remember that the system must conform to the time in which we are alive. So that the situation in which we are placed in our temporal existence must enable us to do these things satisfactorily, continuously, regularly, effectively. Otherwise, there is no use.

So this is the problem of religion. Religion keeps us bound to the past, chained to the past, chained to the sins of Adam and Eve; if they have sinned! I don't think they have. The doctrine of Original Sin, that, ever since that time we have been falling and falling and falling. Now, this philosophy, this theology is anti-evolutionary, first. Second, it is demeaning. Third, it makes us useless to ourselves. Fourth, it makes us so impotent that we can do nothing for ourselves. And fifth, it binds us as slaves to a church, which should liberate us. Five very important reasons why we should get away from the religious bondage, the thraldom of religion, which is holding us in greater slavery than the Romans ever held their slaves in, or the Greeks, or the Egyptians. Now, we are not preaching against religion, we are only pointing out the facts of religion. If rituals could liberate, there should be no more human beings here. I mean, after millions of years, and thousands of years of praying and preaching, and attending these religious institutions whether a church or a temple, it doesn't matter, what are we still doing here?

So, we have to judge these things, not emotionally but practically. Is it good for me? Is it doing any good to me? Have I developed an iota on the way? Am I today at least one centimetre in advance of where I was yesterday? If the answer is no, we have to change. If I am sitting in the TGV in the Gare de Lyon in Paris, and I am always there, it is no good to me that the great SNCF of France is running the best trains in the world, if that particular train doesn't move for me. If it is to leave at 12.25, well 12.27, 12.40, 12.50, it doesn't matter. But it must move. If at three o'clock it is still there, there is certainly something wrong. If at three o'clock I am still in it, I am a fool.

Now, this is the same story with religion. We are all still in that religion, as I said yesterday. I would like today to quote Swami Vivekananda: "It is good to be born in a religion, but it is bad to die in a religion." It is a profound statement that few people have understood. It means that I start off with something – a capital, a heritage, a system of philosophy, but I have to grow out of it like out of anything else.

In the theory of metempsychosis, loosely called reincarnation, this is the value of death itself – that I finish my existence in one body. Its purpose is finished. It can be useful to me no more. It has now become a bondage, a prison. I escape out of it. I get out of it by a voluntary act. Though we don't know it, in our lower consciousness, it is always a voluntary act. And we choose another body if we have still to continue on this terrestrial existence, so that we may continue to evolve further. It is like class after class after class in schools and colleges. It is like grade after grade after grade of promotion in the army. When I am promoted from the first class to the second class in school, I don't think I'm dead. I don't weep that I cannot be with the teacher of the first class any more. I don't get attached to the bench on which I was sitting in that classroom. I am happy to be out of it.

The soul too is happy when we die. When any human being dies, if you watch the face of the person after death, you will find the utmost peace and tranquility on the face of that body, which you never see during his lifetime. This is a fact. It is the truth. People must have the courage to look at dead bodies. And this drama of dressing up the dead body, colouring it, rouging it, shaving it, presenting it like a gentleman or a gentlewoman, is crazy. Even in death, we are cheating life. A dead body is no less beautiful than a newly-born baby; if you have the eyes to see.

If you can see that utter peace, that utter relaxation, after which … there is a yoga asana called the *shavasana* in the Patanjali yoga system of hatha yoga. Shavasana means the asana of the corpse, the dead body. And it teaches us to lie as still and as relaxed, as utterly relaxed as a dead body. And if you are able to do it for ten or fifteen minutes, you don't need pills, you don't need doctors, you don't need psychotherapists, you don't need anything. But it is so difficult, because in a sense it is like dying while you are still alive. Which is what Babuji says of the spiritual condition – the living dead.

So the whole thrust of spirituality is to die without dying. Whereas the whole thrust of religion seems to be to live without living. And these are two opposite streams of thought, of practice, of theology, of teaching, of achievement. One lives without living, therefore he is dead even while he's alive. The other dies without dying, therefore he is alive even when he is dead. That is redemption.

So what is the difference between religion and spirituality? You must be able to say this when people ask you what is the difference, what are you talking of? This is religion. This is spirituality.

To me, the biggest mistake, the biggest and saddest part of religion, is that it seeks to *reconnect* us to God. Now I question this reconnection. If I can be disconnected from God even for one billionth of a second, I wouldn't exist. Then where is the question of reconnecting? I mean, it is a total lie. And we have been living this lie, accepting this lie, swallowing this lie, suffering with this lie, feeling a disconnection from God, which can never be. All because we are taught to feel that way. Therefore, much of the misery on earth.

If we feel we are disconnected, we are also morally disconnected. Therefore we feel: "When God is not there, what in heaven does it matter what I do?" We are able to sin with impunity, commit crimes with impunity, because God is not there. When I am reconnected with Him, I shall get myself absolved of all my sins, and on a Friday go to church for a confession. It's over!

This question of reconnecting with God is of the utmost importance. Because there can never be a reconnecting, because that connection can never be broken, being myself part of that divinity from eternity to eternity. Otherwise we wouldn't be here. We may feel it or we may not feel it. When we don't feel it, we are ignorant. When we feel it, we are beginning to be spiritual.

Spirituality teaches us to feel ourselves in our Self, by turning our attention inwards, imagining the Divine presence in the heart as brilliant light, Divine light. Slowly, by meditation, repeated meditation, deeper and deeper meditation, we can become merged in that presence. Eventually not being conscious that you are here at all, we achieve what we call the *samadhi* state. And then you wonder what this is all about. It is better to sit and meditate and be lost to this world. "It is so nice. Why did you stop the meditation?" People ask, "Why did you end the sitting? It was so wonderful. I was so absorbed. I didn't know whether I was sleeping or in the samadhi state."

Now which religion has ever given you this condition? It only teaches you to worship a statue or an icon. Kiss it, perhaps. Have it put on your head in blessing, and you walk out leaving it there and yourself here. Religion disconnects us again and again from our Source. Spirituality connects us once and for all, with the very first sitting. Thereafter, that connection is being deepened and deepened. Deepened until in my final merger with that, I am the Absolute all over again.

So it is very important to realise the differences between religion and spirituality. I mean volumes can be written about the differences. "Thou shalt not sin against God," religion says. Spirituality says, "Don't sin against your Self." "Don't tell lies to God," says religion. "Don't tell lies to your Self," says spirituality.

If you just think of it without becoming emotional, and involved with your religion and your God, which is another lie – how can you have your religion and your God? Your God must be my God. The names may be different. You may call Him something, I may call

Him something. But if there is only one God, there can be only one Absolute, there can only be one Infinite. How can your God of Christianity be different from my God of Hinduism, or the Muslim's God? They are all the same, but we have always been quarrelling from time immemorial. Religion has incited people to war and victories over each other in the name of God. Killing in the name of God, crucifying in the name of God, dividing man from man, woman from woman, human being from human being, until we end up with racial hatred, religious hatred, all in the name of God. "Oh, God of Abraham," says the Jew. He doesn't know who Abraham is. He doesn't know who is the God of Abraham. "The nameless one," yes, that is correct. Because God can have no name. But if I use a wall, even though it is blank, no pictures, yet it is a petrification of this concept. Why should I need a wall?

So, Babuji Maharaj said, "Religions divide." When we sit in meditation, there is no God with a name, there is no God with any form. There is God without attributes. It is the absolute abstract. This unites. Otherwise, we cannot have fifteen nationalities, twenty-five nationalities, sitting in one audience all meditating upon the same thing.

I have seen what they call Universal Temples of God. But you go into the temple, there is a statue of the Buddha, there is a statue of Krishna, there is a Shiva, there is a Christ on his cross. Again, they are divided in one church, one temple, one place of worship.

True unity of human beings can only come through the heart. And that unity of the heart can only come by the recognition of the innermost Self, which is divine, seated there. Your Self is no different from my Self, is no different from anybody else's Self here.

With this recognition of the essence of the Self, which is universal, which is in all things, not only do we become members of one human race, but we also learn to identify ourselves with every form of existence on earth. Whether it be stone, whether it be tree, bird, animal, it doesn't matter, because that same Self is in the heart of that too.

But religion divides humanity from the rest of creation. "O, God of Abraham." Why not, "O, God of the Lion," "O, God of the Sheep?" Why not, "O, God of the Mountain?" After all, Moses did go up the mountain and find God there. So, religion not only divides human being from human being, but human being from everything else. So that, essentially, each human being stands alone as an individual, isolated, lonely, suffering island. We have no companionship. We have no confidence. Our self-confidence is gone. Our confidence in everybody else is gone. And we have no God to turn to because he is in some blessed temple or other place. And therefore, if I cannot walk; my legs are amputated; I have cancer; I have to be in bed; I am literally dying Godless. So you see what a tragedy this has become. Utter tragedy, ultimate tragedy, desolation, despair, the ultimate darkness.

Now what is there to believe in spirituality? Religion requires belief. Religion requires faith. Spirituality requires nothing. Spirituality requires you, and your aspiration to become a perfect you. If there is an individual who is aspiring to become perfect, he is fit for spirituality. What does he need? To sit and meditate. On what? On the abstract in the heart. But how can we meditate on the abstract? Use the divine light. Because light, according to my Master, is not, in a sense, physical. It has no form, no name, no attributes, etc., etc. It is nearest to the spiritual ultimacy. And if you are able to do that sincerely, knowing that you are going to benefit from it and nobody else; knowing that you are going to grow spiritually and nobody else. If you meditate, I cannot become spiritual. If I meditate, you cannot become spiritual.

This system of spirituality puts the responsibility back right where it belongs. Instead of becoming beggarly seekers of benefits in places of worship, praying on our knees, grovelling before priests, weeping and beating our breasts with guilt, spirituality says, "My son, sit where you are. Put yourself into your heart. Meditate there. Find Him who is always there. And since He is you, how can He be anything other than what you are? How can you be anything other than what He is?" That is the moment when this flash of illumination comes, and you say, "I am everything. I am not God, but I am divine. I am God-like. I am blessed, for today, in me, I find Him whom I have been seeking throughout the universe all my life." Or, so many lives, who knows?

So these are the differences between religion and spirituality. Why one should be chosen against the other is not a matter of sentiment, or emotion, or even of tradition. Tradition may be good, but it is useless. Everything good is not useful. A nice bit of diamond is good. Twenty-five karats, I would love to have one. But if I am on a desert island with nothing to eat, that diamond is as useless to me as anything else. What is truly useful to me, I must understand. What it is good to have and be feeling happy about, is something else – diamonds, furs, silks, good houses, cars.

So we must always distinguish between what is useful and effective, and what is just good. Everything in the world is good. Everything in nature is good. God created nothing bad. He could not have created anything bad. Even poison cannot be bad. But He did create a law that certain things don't go together, like a human being and corruption – they don't go together. If the Old Testament is right when it says, "God created man in His own image," then we cannot be corrupt, we cannot be vicious, we cannot be cruel. Therefore, when we have these Commandments which say, "Don't do this, don't do that," it only means, "Do what you have to do. Be divine in your essence. Be loving, be compassionate, be merciful. Treat everything as yourself." Not as part of yourself, not just as brothers and sisters, because brothers and sisters quarrel more than anybody else. I have not found a brother loving a brother or a sister loving a sister yet, and this is as old as the story of Cain and Abel.

I think sometimes that in spiritual brotherhoods also we fail because we are still thinking of that brotherhood – the blood brothers, where we are always quarrelling, fighting with each other, claiming the property of the parents. This is a different type of brotherhood where I see my Self in you. And you must similarly learn to see your Self in me. Therefore, it is the Self that you love when you look at somebody else. And this Self eventually becomes not your self or my self, but the Self, the reflection of the Ultimate in our heart.

So this is the extraordinarily moving and ennobling adventure of the spiritual life. Any spiritual embarkee, let us say, one who embarks on the spiritual life, if he is still thinking of the past, he is denying himself or herself the spiritual prosperity of the future. The greatest truth of spirituality is, "Cut yourself free from the past." All of the past. You cannot select. Otherwise, like I said yesterday, if you vomit, you cannot choose something there to eat again, saying, "This is good for me, that is bad for me. Let me swallow this." Once out, it is out. So the past is, in a sense, an excreta of time. It has been passed off. It has been excreted out of the present. And it is as valuable as excreta. It can manure my fields. It should not hold me. If I am able to use it, "Well, I did this, it was wrong. Therefore I don't do it again," in that sense, the past is useful. But if I think of it and say, "Oh, my God, what did I do? What did I do? Please help me. Please forgive me", this is useless. I am going deeper and deeper into the past, and therefore deeper and deeper into sin. Because this, in the idea of spirituality, is the only sin – that instead of thinking of the future, I am with the past.

Thank you.

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Religion & Spirituality — II

I would like to go further in this matter of religion, and try to examine what we should do with religion. I don't know whether we can do anything, but whether we should. First of all, I'm a little sorry that nowadays people blame religions when they move out of whatever religion they have been practising. Religion is not to blame. It is like saying that there should be no atoms, then there would not have been atom bombs. Nature creates atoms; human beings create atom bombs. So it is the human being we must blame, not nature. Similarly, nature creates poisons for its own purpose. What is poison to me is very necessary for the snake, because it has to live, it has to exist, it has to kill to eat.

Religions have developed according to the need of the time, like everything else. Primitive religions are primitive because they were useful to primitive human beings. To us they are primitive,

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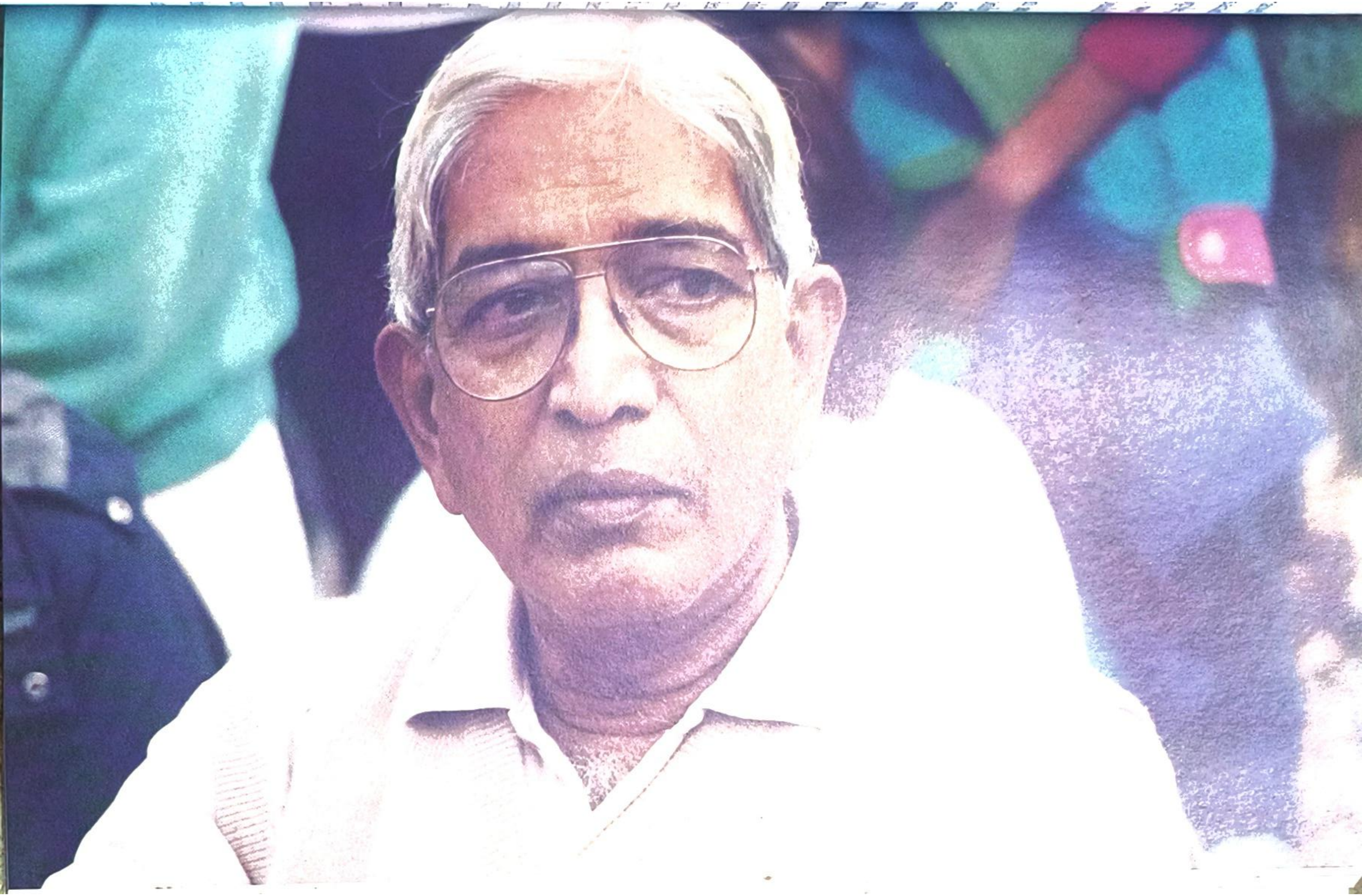
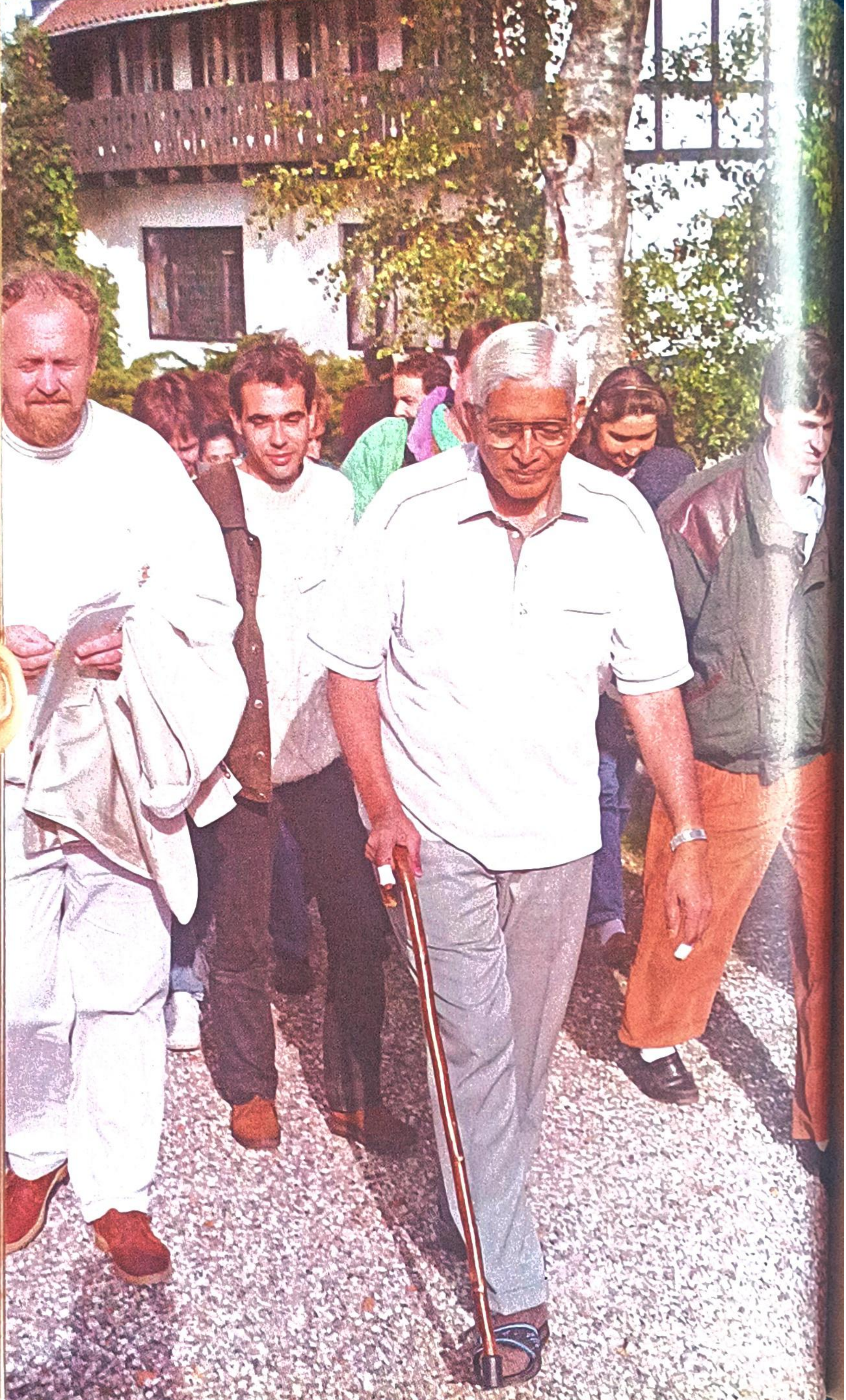
but to them they were current. If we could travel back in time twenty thousand years, thirty thousand years back, and be with those primitive people, who had that primitive worship of those times, we would not say they were primitive. They would have been modern.

The second thing to remember is that religion as a body, as an organised body, came into existence only long after human beings came. As Babuji Maharaj said, the Vedas are not the beginning of Hinduism. There must have been something before the Vedas. They were not written; they were not spoken. But God has always been there and ever since man came into existence, he must have had some idea of this divinity. Not clear – primitive, but yet some idea. Like children's idea of their parents changes as the children grow. A father to a three-year-old child is not the same as a father to a teenager, nor the father to a person of sixty years. The son is the same, the father is the same, but the relationship is changing all the time. What we seek from them is changing all the time. What a son wants from his father when he is three, he doesn't need any more when he is sixty. So the idea that religions have developed according to the need of the people of those times, is a very truthful idea, and a very valid idea too, I should say. Because after all, we can only seek what we seek. We must also be taught what we should seek. When in the Bible it says, "Seek and ye shall find," it is implicit in





that statement, at least to my understanding, that we shall only find what we seek, nothing more.

If you seek peace in a church, you will find peace. If you go there asking for nice church music, you'll find that. Stained glass windows? You'll find that too. If you want to find a place for confession, it is there. But if you want to find God, no doubt you will find Him. "Seek and ye shall find." It is implicit. In fact it must be re-worded to read, "Ye shall find what ye seek." If in food you seek pleasure, you'll find pleasure, though it is followed by pain. If you want nourishment, you will seek the right food for that. If you want growth you will seek according to that. If you want health, you will seek according to that.

So this is one great truth that spirituality offers very clearly, that you will not find anything which you don't seek. Or to put it in another way, you can find only that which you seek. You seek pleasure in a situation, sure it is there. In the same situation if you seek pain, it is also there. Now the two are always part of the same thing. A nice pizza – the pleasure is there, the pain of indigestion is later there. The wise man says, "Well, the pleasure is first, but the pain is second. So let me avoid the pleasure so that I can avoid the pain." The man who cannot think beyond his nose, he says, "So what. Let me have the pleasure first, then we shall see about the rest later. There are doctors. There are medicaments. And, we can always assuage the situation by having another pizza tomorrow."

So, they are the real people who are going round and round in this circle of cause and effect, pain and pleasure, suffering, misery and happiness. So when he says, "Seek and ye shall find," it means, please learn to seek correctly, so that you can find that which is good for you, that which is capable of making you grow.

Now when we look into religion for the causes of our suffering, they are there in plenty. Christ suffered; he suffered all his life. He was crucified – the ultimate pain of crucifixion; the ultimate pain of betrayal by one of his twelve disciples; the pain of being let down by his own race, the Jews; the pain of betrayal by the Romans, who could have given him justice, but they washed their hands off the whole affair. So, his life was one of pain and suffering. So when we think of Christ, and we say, "No, no. What sort of an example are you setting before me? Do you also want me to suffer, and to be betrayed, and to die on the cross?" Yes! If you want to find what he found, yes. What did he find? He found also his God. He found the foolishness of humanity. He did not worry about it, he was not sorry about it, because he said this is the level of human beings in the ordinary state. He found it possible for himself to rise above them, and to try to raise them to his levels. This entails sorrows of course. Like if a woman wants to have a child, she has to bear the pain of childbirth.

I have said this before, and I must repeat it again today, that all creative acts have pain as their fundamental base. He who seeks to avoid pain can never be creative – in any sense, any creation. All creativity is based on suffering, on pain, on rejection. Therefore, you cannot have one without the other. He found all these things and was able to live with that suffering of pain, of rejection, of betrayal, only because he was able to love. So his life teaches us that love can enable us to bear everything. Without love, we think of ourselves; with love, we think of everybody else. So, love should make you outward oriented, "Not me, but everybody else." The absence of love makes us self-centred, selfish.

There is no need to diverge any more into this, and to try to prove that this is true. Because selfishness is a lack of love, even of the self. You cannot love everybody and not love yourself. Therefore, when we are selfish, and we indulge in things which we know are destructive, which we know are going to destroy us, it means we don't love ourselves. On the contrary we hate ourselves. And the hatred is so subtle that it becomes a sort of a self-destructive, suicidal attempt to drink one's self to death, to drug one's self to death. So all selfishness is self-hatred. This is my opinion, and I'm quite sure this is right.

Whereas if you love, you must love yourself too. If you love yourself, you cannot do crazy things with your self. You cannot destroy yourself. Then comes the question of finding the reality of your existence: What are you here for? Where are you to go? It's no use asking, "*Quo vadis Domini*?" He knows where He is going. I must know where I am going. "Quo vadis Domini?" What for? It's a crazy question, "Where are you going God?" God doesn't go anywhere, doesn't come from anywhere. He is everywhere at all times. So where can He go, where can He come from? So "Quo vadis" and put your name in front of it. Then it makes some sense.

So to use religion we must know how to use it correctly, wisely. There are the wrong examples, there are the right examples. But the problem always is that if the religion has become fixed to a particular time in the past, then it can only serve the needs of that time, not of this time. This is implicit in religion. A religion created for two thousand years ago, for a society of two thousand years ago, cannot be suitable to us today. The body of a man who died two thousand years ago cannot be used today. The bread that was baked two thousand years ago cannot be eaten today.

So, we have to understand that like crops (agricultural crops) grow on the soil of today, they have to grow on the soil of today, we too must live and grow in the soil of our societies, where we are born on this earth of today. Therefore, religion has to be left behind unless that religion is able to change with time, refine its ways of approach to divinity, its approach to the worshippers, and offer something that is possible of practice, capable of being practised, and which is effective for our needs of today.

Therefore, it is not religions which are wrong. It is we who are wrong in sticking to religions of the past. The religion is blameless. The shirt that I wore when I was three years old I cannot use today. It is not the fault of the shirt. It was good for me when I was three years old. I had a different set of clothes when I was ten and sixteen. They are no more useful to me because they don't fit. Qualitatively they may be good. It is still the same silk, the same leather for the shoes, but they don't fit. Does my religion of the past fit my needs of today? If it does, continue. If it does not, stop. This is the truth of religions. We should not revile religions. We should not speak against religions. Because they were holy, and they are holy, in the sense that their thought and their efforts were with the holy, or the holy ideals of Godhead.

If people were ignorant, and they worshipped strength – we have Hanuman in India, the god of strength; we have Ganesha, the elephant god – these are the crude ideas of the past. Like the Masai – the people of the Masai tribes of Africa, they killed a lion, took out its heart and ate it, thinking that by eating the heart of a lion, each individual human being would become lion-hearted. It's not possible.

So, this crudity is there, embedded in the past because people were crude. They had no intellect, they had no developed intellect. They had an association with nature at the basest possible level – I don't mean base in quality, but base as a base, at the lowest level where you had to interact with tigers and lions and monkeys and other people like yourself – half animal, half human being. And they tailored their approach to those times when there was no language, there was no understanding. The ability to philosophise had not yet come. The ability to think in the abstract was not there. People could not count beyond five or ten. So those religions were for people of those times, and rightly the people themselves developed something that was useful for them. Subsequent ages saw people developing what was useful for them in that time, in that epoch, in that society. We have to develop something which is good for us in our time, in our epoch, in our society. Therefore, spirituality.

So, there is no use in thinking that Christianity is useless, Hinduism is stupid. Nothing is useless, nothing is stupid. Everything was useful at one time; everything is useful at one time; everything will be useful at some time. But out of all this wealth of this universe, I have to use what is useful to me today. In this lies our wisdom. There's no use in calling ourselves advanced human beings, intellectual human beings, educated human beings, belonging to high-tech societies where every child uses a computer today. And yet we think superstitiously of the past, superstitiously of the dark, afraid of death, fear of death.

All our civilisation, our education, our high-tech societies are only superficial. Now, we have to convert this superficiality of modern technology, knowledge, wisdom, and try to embed it in our core, in the core of my being, which again is why we meditate. We meditate with a developed mind, with a conscious mind, a mind which is far more conscious today than it was say three to five thousand years ago, ten thousand years ago. And with that enlarged consciousness, with our advanced ideas of what a God must be – not just a doler-out of goodies, not just one who will say, "I pardon you," not somebody who will just eradicate all problems from my life or remove all obstructions from my path, but a God who will represent to me the ultimate goodness of existence and pull me up to Himself, we must meditate.

Therefore, spirituality, especially Sahaj Marg says, "Don't ask in your prayers." "Prayer is begging," Babuji Maharaj says. But we continue to beg. When we beg, we are beggars, whatever else we may be. We may be wise beggars, professorial beggars, beautiful beggars, advanced beggars, kingly beggars but we are still beggars. And, if I am a beggar, whatever else I may be, I am nothing else, I am only a beggar. And if, as spirituality says, "Not fear, but love should be your relationship with God," then when we are begging, we are denying that love. Lovers don't beg. Your child doesn't beg from you. He doesn't fall on his knees and say, "Oh, beloved mother, bless me with my next meal. I have sinned. I have gone against thee. I have disobeyed thy orders. Forgive me for all these trespasses, and bless me with my divine meal. And please mother, make it palatable, let there be ice cream in it." We don't say all these things because the mother is mine, the food that she cooks is mine, by birthright as we call it.

Birthright means the right derived by being born. If I am born to a particular woman, that woman is my birthright. By birthright she is my mother. By birthright everything she has is mine. I don't have to beg. I don't even have to ask. I can just take what I need. And if the truth that we are all born of the ultimate source, makes that also our birthright, then God is my birthright. Who can deny this truth? If he is mine by birthright, he is my father or my mother, whichever way you may choose to think. Then why beg from him? Why try to steal from him? Why try to cheat him? Why not just go about like a son and take? Therefore Babuji Maharaj said, "Loot me." If you ask your father for pocket money, he may give you ten francs. So don't ask. Just say, "Papa, I need some money, I'm taking it." 'Taking it' is enough. And he will smile and say, "This blighter is trying to be too wise." But he will not object.

So, in denying God as a total presence always around me, always with me, always in me, I am denying my birthright, I am denying my very birth itself. I am making myself an orphan, a spiritual orphan, cut away from its source, not knowing where its home is, not knowing who its father and mother are. Therefore, we are lonely, we feel outcast, we suffer, and we're afraid. So this connection (which religion pretends to make and cause a reconnection) is an everlasting connection. We don't have to try to find it again, or to do it again, but to realise that it is there. Therefore, religion deals with redemption and deliverance; spirituality deals with realisation. I realise that I have always been with Him. Or better still, that He has always been with me. He has always been in me. That, without Him in me I could not exist.

You know, like we exist in time. Anything which exists, anything of which you say, "This exists," must have an existence in time. Otherwise it cannot exist. It may be one billionth of one billionth of one billionth of a second, yet if it exists, it must have that existence in time. Similarly, anything which exists must exist in Him, because He is time. According to the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says, "I am Time" – time infinite, time immutable, time indestructible, time eternal, where time itself becomes a dimension of His existence, and not He himself.

Therefore, spirituality confers upon us this eternality, this mastery of time. That means one who is the master of time, he is the master of his past, his present, and his future. And therefore we are eternal, we are existing not in the past, nor in the present, nor in the future. Because, like when you say, "This is my house," there are rooms in which you are not physically at the moment. Now, this *château* is ours, but we are only in this tent. But yet we say that this is our château. I am everywhere in this château, and so are you. So this eternality as a concept must become eternality as an experience of the self. Which means, all barriers to this perception, this feeling, must go.

What are the barriers? That I am I alone; that I am for myself alone; that I am imprisoned in this body; that I am born at one time and die at another time. All these concepts of space and time are imprisoning us within a confined consciousness, an imprisoned consciousness. Therefore, being in prison within our own consciousness, we are prisoners of the self. Therefore, this small self must be destroyed. The prison is broken. The truly infinite Self comes into exposure. It is as if this self is blocking that Self. You know, like you can block the sun with a coin. It doesn't require another object the size of the sun to block the sun. You can just put your thumb against it and it is blocked. This little thumb can block out the sun. So is this little thumb great? Can you go around saying, "Look at my thumb. I can block the sun with this."

Similarly, with our little stupid selves, the lower selves, we are blocking divinity, and feeling proud and saying, "I don't need God. I am great. I belong to the Occidental races, the developed races." Infinite knowledge, infinite wealth, infinitely destructive powers, bombs which can destroy half the world today. Perhaps in the next ten years, which can break the earth into two, or into four or into fifteen, it doesn't matter. If it is broken, we are all dead. This is our pride.

Our pride lies not in creation but in destruction. Christ said, "I come not to destroy but to fulfil." The modern anti-Christ must say, "I come not to fulfil, but to destroy." So this has become the cult. This has become the religion of the West. Destruction! Destruction of what? Of your higher Self, and aggrandisement of the lower self so that, today, each individual self feels it is the most important thing, it must be satisfied, it must be fulfilled, it must have its pleasure. That is ultimate selfishness, total self-involvement, total self-centredness so that, today we think of nothing else but ourselves. "If a million people are dying, so what? They are stupid, they are crazy, they have no education, they are black. So let them die. So long as I am alive, so long as my house is safe, it is heated well in winter, cooled well in summer, so that my pantries are full, my gas connection is there, I can dial anywhere in the world, what matters the rest of the world." Forgetting, that if eighty-five percent of this human race is to be destroyed, you would have very little left to connect with.

The beauty of the tree, its leaves and its flowers, is in the buried roots of that tree. Suppose, the beauty of the tree were to say, "Cut off these roots of mine, because every time a man digs there, he sees these ugly tendrils of the roots, going about here and there, feeding on that dirty slush and mud. I want to be beautiful, I don't want corruption as my base." What do you think would happen if the roots were cut off?

The roots of your existence are in all of humanity. The roots of your wealth are in the whole world. The roots of your being are on this planet. And the root, if it exists, of your liberation, is from this human source, which is a total source, which cannot be partialised or compartmentalised into Occident and Orient, and all these stupid things. Either I am a part of humanity, a human being, drawing my sustenance from the whole human race, evolving out of that enormous wealth of beauty and love and charity and mercy into something divine, or if I cut myself, I cut my Self into two.

Therefore, spirituality says, "No differences." It is no use sitting here and saying – "You know, Sahaj Marg is a wonderful system, no differences of race, caste, colour, creed, sex, etc., etc." – if you don't practise this outside this château. Here we are all one, or at least apparently one. Are we continuing this outside? If you look at a black beggar on the street, with leprosy, will you be charitable towards him? Will you give him a hundred francs and say, "Brother, go and have a pizza." Or will you say, "Sheee, get out of my sight you dirty rascal." Which will you do? That is the test of your faith, that is the test of your truthfulness to yourself, that is the test of the way in which Sahaj Marg must mould you.

It is not enough to practise it here. It is necessary to practise it out in the world, speak about it in the world, see that other people change in this way. Remembering that a tree may give a thousand seeds, only that the thousand seeds may give a thousand trees which will again give a thousand seeds each. Otherwise, a barren tree is of no use – it is only fit to be cut and to be used as firewood. If you are barren in the sense that you don't produce that from which you have grown yourself, you are a lie to yourself. You are a living lie, you are cheating destiny, you are cheating God. You are cheating the human race of that which you should give to them, many-fold, having received something from here.

"Go forth and multiply," did not mean go forth and have fun and have many children through many wives. It's a very convenient interpretation of that sentence, "Go forth and multiply" to me means, "Go forth and multiply that which I have given you." It is too convenient to think this gives us sexual freedom and license, to sleep around and breed, as they say in India, like pigs. "Go forth and multiply," means multiply the wealth that I have endowed you with. Multiply the knowledge that I have blessed you with. Multiply the benefits that you have received from me so that you may give, remembering the law that one who has received must in turn give. If he keeps, then he will be lost. That which he has got will be taken away. This is the law. One cannot controvert it. One may go against civil laws – "*Rappel* 130", you can drive at 160. After all, when the policeman catches you, you will only pay a fine. It doesn't matter. But divine law, spiritual law – that what I have given, you must multiply in yourself and distribute so that they may receive, multiply it in themselves, and distribute in turn, so that one giver can produce millions of people who are benefited from that if this law is broken, if this chain of receiving and continuing to give is broken, there ends civilisation.

Civilisation is not in having cars and atomic power plants and beautiful trains and planes. Civilisation is in receiving from there and giving here, very much like power plants give power. Transforming stations reduce the voltage, or whatever it is, to distribute. Therefore, you have the giving organisation, the distributing authority, and the receptive recipients. If we fail in this duty, we fail for ourselves too. Because then that which you have received will be of no use to you, too. Water must flow. Flowing water is clean; stagnant water stinks.

So this is the spiritual law. And if one is able to do this with faith, with courage, most of all with love – because only love can make us give what we have – and if with love you give, you will find that the more you give, the more you receive. Ultimately, nature finds a person who is able to give without restraint, without thought of the self, and he becomes a conduit for the Divine. Such persons are fit to be called, are really fit to be called, saints, masters. Not those sanctified after they have died three hundred years later. How can a saint be a saint in retrospect? I mean it's a parody of the truth. That so-and-so lived in 1780, and today, some authority decides to make him a saint, and we have one more saint in the tradition, one more feast for that saint in the calendar, and everything is nice.

If He gives me without thinking of what I am, whether I am fit to receive it or not, I should also not think when I give, whether you are fit to receive or not. God cannot think. God does not think. For Him, everything in this universe is His. They are all His children. One child is black, one is white, one is tall, one is fat, one is thin, one is stupid, one has intelligence. But God cannot say, "Throw away this stupid child. Finish it off. One child less to bother with." We cannot say it either. There are mothers who are unfortunate enough to have children who are cripples, who are cretins. But you don't immediately put it in the gas chamber and finish it off. It would be easy. Life would be better. But that is the secret of existence, that when you suffer for another, your life is ennobled. You suffer because you love. And it is not the suffering that ennobles, it is the love which ennobles. Suffering and love go together. Pleasure and love, well, it's not true, it's not correct. And when you find pleasure and love, you should be a little suspicious about it.

Now there is one thing more – that people are afraid of death, as we started saying, precisely because we think we are born, and that's a happy occasion; and when we are dead, it's a miserable occasion. Even in books by very important authors, I find this concept in the Western publications – that, we are here only to be miserably polished off by some insensate and blind fate. I don't know how so-called intelligent people have this thought that, "Destiny is against me. That, God is a vicious being, cruel, playing with me like a cat playing with a mouse." I mean how can people think like this? I don't know. I have read very important authors who write in this fashion. God should have mercy on them.

But the whole thing is, "Because I think I am alive only when I am in the body, I am happy with my birth and sad about my death." Now, how can an eternal being, or one blessed with eternity of existence, think like this? Therefore, the attachment to the body is what creates this idea of birth and death, and makes us afraid throughout life about that which will happen someday, as nothing more than 'I' escaping out of this shell into the liberty, which I have to achieve. We want liberation on one side, that is why we are all here. On the other side, we are afraid of death. These are two contradictory ideas in ourselves. And since they are there in us, both together, it is not surprising that we are not progressing as fast as we should. Spiritual aspirants who are growing all the time should have lost this idea of the fear of death long ago. Fear of what? Death doesn't exist. If I take off my shirt and put it in the wash basket it doesn't mean it is dead, nor does it mean that I am dead. Both are still there, the only thing is they are not together. The shirt is somewhere and I am still somewhere. So when I am dead, my body is somewhere and I am still somewhere. What is there to worry about? What is there to be afraid about?

So, the idea of the fear of death is a limiting factor. It still means that we are seeking liberation being afraid of that same liberation. Fear of death is the fear of liberation. This is something we must all understand very positively. Fear of death is the fear of liberation. As long as we are afraid to die, we will not be liberated, but we will continue to be imprisoned within that cycle of birth and death of which we are so afraid. That means one who is afraid of death will have to die again and again and again until he loses his fear of it.

Now this is a psychological truth, that psychologists are always trying to expose us to that which we are afraid of, so that we may lose the fear of that particular thing. If you are afraid of dogs, they bring a dog near you, ask you to pet it, put it on your lap, and your fear goes. Here also, we do the same thing. As Babuji Maharaj said, "Every meditation is a training in dying." Because when you go really deep into yourself, and you come out after it and say, "I was absorbed. I don't know where I was. I didn't even know whether I was sleeping or meditating," you have literally been not there. In a sense, you were dead to this existence. Therefore, meditation is a training in dying. And if we have done it correctly, we should be masters of death, masters of the act of dying, one who can die when he wishes, one who can die when he chooses; coming back again and again if he wishes, so that his death is not really a death, but will be a resurrection like in the Christian tradition. Christ died, was put into the sepulchre, and he disappeared. We call it the resurrection.

So, if we continue to be afraid of death, it means we have not been meditating properly. Our practice has been wrong. So we should think of this, and say, "What in heaven am I doing? Have I been meditating at all? If so, have I been meditating correctly? Why am I still afraid of death?" Is not meditation a training in dying, daily? Should not one who does something daily become a master of that? Should I not by now be a master of death? Therefore, we say, "One who is a master of life is also a master of death." As Babuji Maharaj said, "He alone is the master of life and death as we understand it." Therefore, it is a divine state when we achieve this purpose, when we become free of the fear of death and of the craving to be born. Both are negative. "That which never was, shall never be," says the ancient Upanishad. And "That which is today, must have been, and will ever exist," because nothing new is coming into this universe. It is there as He created it. The soul is eternal. It is part of the divine essence, the ultimate, the infinite, the Godhead. It can no more cease to exist than God can cease to exist. God is not born, He does not die. Therefore, I am not born, I cannot die. All that I see and experience of birth and death are my problems imposed upon myself by my observing people being born and people being dead. Therefore, I think I was born and I am going to die. The truth is that my body came into existence and will cease to be. I am eternal.

So this is the teaching of spirituality. And I repeat, if we are meditating properly, there is an absolute mastery of death that waits for us. One who is the master of something cannot be afraid of that which he is master of. He is the master – Death becomes a subordinate, an instrument. So we use death as something which we need to get out of a certain situation. Therefore, the soul can manifest itself again if it chooses, if it has work to do – again using death to liberate itself from that momentary manifestation in an environment which it must clean and remodel. Thus, masters come into existence at their will, born when they wish, leaving when they wish, neither the slaves of birth, nor the slaves of death, but masters of both.

Thank you.

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Death Is a New Opportunity

To continue with this idea of death – if it is understood in the spiritual context, it is the most remarkable, the most beautiful act of nature. Whereas we have, because of our identification with the body and its life, totally negated that original spiritual value of death, the idea of death, and converted it into something we're afraid of all of our lives.

Those who have been deeply absorbed in meditation would have seen that there is nothing to be really afraid of. We are deeply merged in the inner Self. Sometimes when we wake up we don't know where we are, where we have been, how much time has elapsed. It is possible to be in that condition even after meditation, if you have the ability to hold on to that condition. Now when we come out of it, it is so blissful. We find that we have been in a state of bliss, in a state of utter peace. In fact, in a state where really nothing exists, and we cannot say what has been, or

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what was, except to say that it was wonderful, and we are sorry it ended.

Now, if that is the condition of death, or the state of death, or the state that we shall achieve when the body is dropped off, why should we be afraid of it? It is because we are holding on to two things. One: the conventional idea and the fear of death, very human; and the other: the spiritual condition of eternity, the condition of the perception of immortality. And we never try to reconcile these two in our minds. I don't think we ever give a moment's thought to this. That, if this is what is going to happen to me when I leave this body, if this is the state of being that I am going to have and to be in, what am I afraid of?

Now, all that religion teaches us is that the hereafter, the state after death, is something to be afraid of in most cases. Some religions say we shall be judged, and we shall be dealt with according to the findings of that ultimate judge, and then sent to heaven or hell. And for that we require the bodies, so they are buried. And on the day of judgement, all the bodies will somehow miraculously come out their graves. I don't know why there should be a body for a judgement. I think a remnant or a vestige of this thought is the habeas corpus in law – that the body must be physically present. And then, of course, knowing what we have been, knowing what we have been doing, what we have been thinking, the good old culpability, we are terrified of that hell which is portrayed so beautifully by the famous book *Inferno* by Dante.

People have always been able to write wonderfully about horrible things, and horribly about wonderful things. I think this is one feature of writing in the conventional sense – that exaggeration takes us to absurd limits. So there is a portrayal of hell where we shall burn, where we shall have molten tar poured into our ears, molten lead poured into our noses, eyes put out again and again. We have the old Hebraic laws, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," which almost seems to make it impossible to ever get out of this mess, into this hell which we have sunk theologically and psychologically. Theological, we can do away with very easily. Once we leave the church we should have got rid of all this nonsense. But psychologically, we have become slaves – slaves to our fears, slaves to our temptations.

You will remember Babuji Maharaj said, "Religions have always used two instruments: fear and temptation," and we have succumbed to them. So, either we are afraid of hell, or we are tempted by the idea of heaven. Therefore, one half of your lives is spent in riotous living, falling into the hell of which you are afraid. The other half, we try to repent, give away to charity, build temples, build churches, give huge donations, and try to negate the earlier half, and in some way try to cheat God, and say, "No, no. Forget all that. See what I'm doing now." But this sort of thing doesn't work, because there is no God to sit in judgement upon us. I presume He has better things to do. I mean it would be a foolish God who would sit in some sort of heaven on a throne, and do nothing but judge millions of souls coming before Him, eternity after eternity. Surely, as the controller of the universe, the creator of the universe, He has more important things to do.

Spirituality says, "Don't be silly. He who judges is You – the real You, the Self within you of whom you are afraid. You are afraid of your Self." You are also afraid of your self, in the lower sense. Most of us don't know what we would do given a certain set of circumstances and opportunities. Therefore, we are afraid. We are afraid of committing ourselves even to our own Self. We are afraid of friendships. We are afraid of situations. We are afraid of circumstances, of emotions, of love, of hate, of death, of life. In fact, we are afraid of everything. Which fear will come up under which circumstance or situation nobody can predict. So, this life of ours, which should have been blessed – full of fulfilment, joy, ecstasy – is full of fear, of greed, of misery, everything reflecting that insensate fear of death. Those who are not able to enjoy, and don't want to sin, keep away from the track of enjoyment because they don't want to sin, not because they are virtuous.

Most of the human virtues that we see exhibited around us, by ourselves and by others, are negative in the sense that to avoid hell we walk on the straight path as far as possible. Not that we are that happy about going to heaven. Who wants to go to heaven? Because we have to die to get to heaven, too. If today you are promised heaven, I don't know how many people would put up their hands here. We really don't want to die. Good, it's a wonderful thought. Because I think this is a reflection of the inner Self which says, "Stupid fellow, there is no death. How can you want to die? Or how can you want not to die?" Either is crazy when there is no such thing as death. So, we have to go by our experience, and not by the theories of religion.

Religions have always tried to frighten their adherents into some sort of stupid obedience, unthinking obedience. And there are some religions which are so expert at it that they will even kill you to prevent you from dying yourself. Cut off your hands and feet. Cut off your head. I don't know which God gave them any authority to kill. So, there are umpteen reasons for shying away from religions. And there is one excellent reason why we must go to spirituality. Because spirituality represents everything that religion is not. The only thing we can say they have in common is the idea of God.

Religion talks about God, makes Him a judge, makes Him capable of punishment. He can be angry, he can send you to hell, more often than not. And even the Christian God is supposed to be, well there is so much talk of compassion and love and mercy, which Jesus Christ preached. The God doesn't seem to have changed. Because He is the God of the priests, the money-changers, the sellers of doves and calves, the makers of icons. I have often felt that if Jesus Christ were to walk on earth today, he would be the person most ashamed of this church which bears his name, the Christian Church. He would not only be ashamed, he would be shocked. And he would have to go into those temples of worship all over again, and overturn the money-changers' tables, set free the doves, break down the pulpits, and all over again start this life that he started two thousand years ago and in which palpably he has failed. It's there before us to see. It is not his failure, it is the failure of those who followed him, who perverted his teaching, who rewrote the Bibles, who hid the real texts, all to suit certain vested interests, vested powers; who re-moulded his thoughts, his ideas, his teachings, to suit their own, so that so-called churches could flourish. So, it is not religion which is flourishing today, it is the church. And they are two different things.

So from spirituality, when it becomes hard and it becomes solidified and gross, you get religion. When that gets hard and gross, you get churches. Full of money, temples, churches, gold, gilt coverings. But that is all you have, what you used to call filthy lucre – very aptly named. But it is there. This is the church as it exists, temples as they exist, any organisation of worship as it exists. And they prey on our fear of death, and our fear of life, because we are also afraid of life. We are afraid of pain. We are afraid of suffering. We are afraid of sorrow. We are afraid of separation. We are afraid of childbirth. Having the baby, we are afraid it will die. When it grows up, we are afraid it will be abducted. When it returns safe from school, we are afraid it will put its head in the gas chamber. When she or he grows up, we are afraid that they will make the wrong liaisons, or get into the drug habit, or smoke, or get AIDS. When is this fear stopping? The mother is afraid when she has conceived a child – she is afraid of childbirth, she is afraid of the child, she is afraid about the child, afraid of herself all along. So this fear has become a constant companion. And because it is a constant companion, we have to constantly go to churches, seeking their guidance, seeking their help. And they are waiting for a candle to be lit, for money on the plate, and a few prayers muttered in Latin, which we don't understand.

The original language of the Bible is supposed to be Aramaic. Then it became Latinised. Then there is the Bible in Greek. So many languages. And I wonder which language God really understands, whether He understands languages at all. Because spirituality says, "Silence is the language of God." Therefore spoken prayers, muttered prayers, shouted prayers, wailed prayers, all are a stupid, useless, waste of time.

And as Babuji said so beautifully, "They are spoiling the atmosphere with their shouts."

So we have to go back to the idea of silence if our prayer is to reach Him. In silence alone can there become possible a union with the Ultimate, which you may call God or anything you like. In the utter silence of the inner Self alone God exists. We have to get into that utter silence ourselves if we are to be able to communicate with Him. If you want to catch a fish, you must get into the water. Or, at least, the bait must be thrown into the water. You cannot have the bait hanging out and the fish in the water, and say, "I'm catching a fish." We have to be in the medium, or in the dimension in which something exists, before we can communicate with that which exists in that dimension.

To love, we must be in a dimension of love. But we are only loving with our heads, evaluating the face, the figure, the texture of the skin, the beauty of the eyes, the redness of the lips. You can read Byron, a famous poet, you will have a lot of these descriptions. And then for that we fall? So it is with the eyes and with the head. Where is this love? So we must be in that dimension. When you are in that dimension, that which is in that dimension like you is attracted. So it is not person attracting person, it is dimension attracting dimension.

This is a thought which you would do well to ponder upon. Therefore, people ran after Babuji.

What was it they saw in Him? They cannot explain. That is precisely the wonder of the beauty, and the beauty of the wonder – that that which is wonderful cannot be explained why it is wonderful; that which is beautiful cannot be explained why it is beautiful. It is. So of God it is said, "He is." Nothing to qualify. He is strong, He is powerful, He is beautiful. The moment you are able to say this, it is no longer God.

But religion speaks of God as merciful, as compassionate, as kind, as the giver, as the lawmaker, as the lawgiver – umpteen descriptions of God. So anything that can be described cannot be God; anything which can be said to be here cannot be God; anything which is said to be there also cannot be God. God cannot be bound by space and time because space and time are dimensions of a temporal existence. There must be that from which space and time also come.

You know it is like a grown-up child which says, "Mummy, mummy, where did I come from?" Somebody says, "Oh, you came from your mother's stomach." "But how? I'm so big, how can I have been in your stomach?" "Well, when you were there you were a dimensionless point." Mathematically a point has no dimension. An egg cell, when it is fertilised, is virtually a dimensionless point. Yet, it is growing and growing and growing, and it produces us: 1.97 metres, 1.87 metres, 1.77 metres, 1.67 metres, giants, normal men, pygmies. Yet, we began as a point. A point has potential. Potential means it has absolute potential to become anything that it wants. But, when the potential is actualised, it is only that which it has become, nothing more.

So, religion speaks of destruction of potential. It says, "You are a human being, you are in the image of God. But you shall go to hell." It is a reverse process. "And there you shall suffer." How, if I am made in the image of God? How, if the macrocosm and the microcosm are the same? How can there be sin? How can there be corruption? How can there be perversion? How can there be hell? And, how can that which is everything, sublime, beautiful, have to go to hell to suffer? So it's a crazy idea, this whole thing.

I remember reading a science fiction story which goes in reverse time. And it was really crazy. The bugle is being blown by, I think, the angel Gabriel. The day of judgement has come. And there is this horrifying spectacle of bodies getting up out of graves, becoming smaller and smaller, going back into the wombs of their mothers, the mother dying, rising up from her grave, into her previous existence, and this goes on timelessly. Because there has been no time. You cannot point out to an original Adam and Eve and say they were the first father and mother. It shows beautifully the absolute absurdity of this idea, projected in reverse. People should think in reverse sometimes. Like, you have to reverse your car when you have to get out of a cul-de-sac or something like that. You should learn to think in reverse. What will I do when I come out of hell? If there is a hell, and if God sends me there, will I ever be able to come out of it? If I come out, what will I become?

I don't know if I told you about an argument I had once with a priest on a plane, traveling between Madras and Madurai. By accident, or by coincidence, I had the window seat, he had the seat on my right. I was reading Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. He kept looking over my shoulder. And it was irritating, but he had his white dress on, the 'habit', as we say in the Catholic Church. And I was not able to tell him to keep quiet, because I was trained in Christian schools. There is a natural reverence also for people in the 'habit'. I kept quiet. Eventually he patted me on the shoulder and said, "Young man, you appear to be educated and intelligent. You are traveling by plane. But I see you are reading this rubbish." I said, "What rubbish?" He said, "This thing, do you believe in all this?" I said, "Well, you know, each one's belief is personal." He said, "No, no. Hinduism is full of utter stupidities. They believe in rebirth." I said, "Don't you believe in it?" He said, "No, no, my son. In the Christian Church we have no tradition of rebirth." I said, "Father can I ask you a question?" He said, "Yes." I said, "What happens when a man dies?" He said, "He awaits the day of judgement." "So, who judges, Father?" He said, "God in heaven judges, and," he said, "the judgement can be for us or against us." I said, "In what sense?" He said, "If we are sinners we can go to hell. And if we are virtuous, in his infinite mercy he will send us to heaven." I said, "Why infinite mercy to send me to heaven? He must have mercy when I have to go to hell. If I have done good and have earned heaven, I don't need his mercy any more." He said, "No, no, my son. We cannot question God's will." Then I said, "Well, what happens afterwards?" He said, "What do you mean what happens afterwards?" I said, "Well, one fellow goes to heaven, one fellow goes to hell, something must happen afterwards." He said, "No, no, I don't understand you." I said, "Father, if I go on a holiday, I come back somewhere. If I am sent to prison, I am released. I have to come out and come back to society. What happens to the souls which are judged after they go to heaven and hell? They cannot be eternally in hell or eternally in heaven." He got angry. He said, "Oh, you are being argumentative." And he went into the toilet. By then, mercifully, the plane landed and he went away. But he was not able to answer this question. You see, this is the thing – what happens afterwards? So, everything must have an answer. Now there is no answer to this – one is sent to heaven, one is sent to hell. Hallelujah. Then what?

Spirituality says, "Nonsense. There is no heaven, there is no hell. We are born because we have certain samskaras, which make it necessary for us to come and exist again, and learn the lessons that we have to learn again. The mistakes we have made in the past on our way, our evolutionary path, we have to correct." So, in this life there comes a point when we cannot learn any more, when we are saturated as it were. So, the soul in its infinite wisdom says, "Enough. Now I have to change." It vacates this body, and if it has to come back again to learn its lessons again, it chooses its next environment, its next body, everything that is necessary. So it is our choice. We choose how long we shall live, where we shall live, to whom we shall be born, in Africa or in Europe, beggar or king. The soul chooses everything. But what happens? After we are born, again this blessed world takes hold of us. Again, the desires start flourishing, temptations start rising, and the course that has been charted out is missed, and we are now going on the wrong tack. So the lesson of the life is not learned. Our living becomes futile. In that sense, our dying was futile, because we died only to live again. We died so that we could build for ourselves a fresh opportunity to evolve. And that opportunity we are destroying ourselves, by our stupid behaviour, stupid thoughts, stupid actions. It's like a sailor who deliberately throws his compass overboard, and allows himself to be buffeted by the winds of the oceans. He has no direction. He has no rudder. He has no sails. One day he will hit an iceberg and die, or sink somewhere and die, or just starve to death.

Now, there is one very interesting thought I had a few days back. We all are born with the same opportunity. When Babuji says, "In this life it is possible," it means that opportunity exists for everybody, irrespective of our birth, irrespective of anything. Therefore, as I said, this is really wonderful socialism at its best, at its spiritual best that all are equal in the eyes of opportunity. Forget God. When we are born, we have the same opportunity, but as we grow up we lose opportunity after opportunity after opportunity. Even by the time we enter our teens most opportunities have been lost. When we have passed our teens, perhaps there is no more any opportunity at all, except to go deeper and deeper into that quicksand in which we have sunk. No choice, no chance. The will is useless because the more you struggle, the more you go in. The quicksand, I don't know what you call the quicksand in French? *Sables mouvants*. Yes. See, once you get in, you are lost.

Now in that sense, for such people, life is a *sables mouvants*. That's why they are going deeper and deeper. They have good intentions. They try to change. They try to correct. But they are sinking in the wrong direction. They now need somebody to throw a rope and pull them out. And that is the guru, the Master. If you say, "Why do I need a Master? I don't need one," well, continue to sink! Who bothers? Nobody is bothered. You have the absolute right to continue to sink, knowing that if you die there, you are going to be given another opportunity by your Self. If you accept help, you may not have to go through this problem of being born again, of losing the way, of not finding a master. Why is it important that we should do it in this life? Because if, unfortunately, we don't achieve our goal in this life and have to be reborn, we may not find a master again. We cannot find our way in a small village, we are lost in cities.

You know, once when I was living in Split, in Yugoslavia, I went out for a swim with the other fellows, very bravely, in the Adriatic. We were hardly 150 metres or so away from the coast. When you look around and there is nothing to see, there is a moment of fear. Now, which way is land? Because I'm not used to that sea, I'm not used to that ocean. At that moment of fear there is no logic. You cannot say the waves will wash me in the direction of the land. We don't think. When there is fear, we don't think. I would have drowned that day, because for a moment that power, that fear was so overpowering – I couldn't breathe. But you know I had my arrogance, being a Leo, and I said, "These Yugoslav blighters, they should not think that they are better than me. Or that I am worse than them, which is the same thing." So I put on a brave face and started swimming, and then I was all right. That moment of fear has to be overcome. I faced it in the Adriatic, off Split. It was a nice experience. So, like that here too fear comes. But this fear must not be allowed to overpower us. Take a few deep breaths and it's finished.

Anyway, not to wander from the point, we give ourselves the time and place of our death more or less. When we are born, we are born with the fullest opportunity, which is not denied to anybody. In this sense, death is really the great leveler. I am surprised that people have had such profound thoughts.

In life we are born into a life of unequal opportunities, materially. Even in the same school some children are brilliant, some children are dropouts. Even in the same company, some rise to the top, some sink to the bottom. Even in the same ocean, some continue to sail, some sink. But at birth, this is the divine law, every child has the same opportunity. And it is this thought, which must prevail where we have schools for all. No white schools and black schools as in Johannesburg until recently. No separate education, because given equal opportunity and given equal effort, achievement must be equal. And this is possible only in the spiritual field.

So, in that sense death erases all the lost opportunities of the past. Missed opportunities, wasted opportunities, wrongly used opportunities, and puts us back once again on the field and says, "Start all over again. You are again at the beginning of the race. It can be won." So what a wonderful thing death really is, if we die rightly. As those who have achieved a spiritual goal in this life, we don't really die, we just sink into the deepest meditation and close our eyes. To others we are dead, but we have escaped into another dimension where we don't even know we had a body. Which is what happens in a samadhi condition. You fall forward, hit your head on the ground and still you don't know it. But not being used to that posture, your muscles start paining and then that wakes you up and you come up and sit erect again. And then you start falling all over again.

So, this end of life, it is stupid to call it death. For one who has achieved spiritual heights it's just a going to sleep. He closes his eyes and he is gone. Others weep, others bewail his loss. Others may cremate his body or bury his body, but he has ceased to be here. He is into another dimension. If you don't achieve that termination to this life, then we have this wonderful, superb, divine mercy, that you start all over again, but at the same point as everybody else. No difference. There is no debit balance here. You are not judged by the past. You are only given an absolutely brand new opportunity with infinite possibilities not denied to anybody.

If we can think of death in the right way, we should say to ourselves, "We have wasted our life, let us not waste our death." This should be our last thought. Because what I could not achieve in life, I can surely achieve in death again, if I know what I'm doing. Therefore at the moment of death, it is necessary to be at least able to be conscious of our purpose and to die.

Like when you sleep, if you make a determination that you shall wake up at five o'clock in the morning, you do wake up at five o'clock. Why? Because there is this mind over matter business. Something wakes me up. It cannot fail. Why does it fail? Because I don't have faith in myself. I am used to having faith in clocks, and things like that. We have transferred our faith to the mechanical world. We need clocks to awaken us, we need timers in our kitchen. Everything we have now, transferred from inside ourselves to outside ourselves. Comfort and peace of mind are not inside, they are outside. They are in our cushions, our carpets, our lovely beds, air conditioners. Whereas, it should be here. If you look meticulously into this thought that, "Everything that should be inside me is now outside me, therefore I am a mere shell," then you will understand what we have become.

Now what is the process to reverse this whole business, to bring back the dependence upon yourself? Cultivate habits afresh. Throw away your alarm clocks. Wake up on time. Learn to be in tune with nature. Depend on the cock which crows. You may say, "Well, to what absurd limits can you carry this?" There are no absurd limits. Because to develop the inner strength, the inner capacity, the inner totality of existence is absolutely possible; whereas outside, you can only transfer so much, and no more. One night you fail to set the alarm, you wake up late the next morning. Or when it rings you just put out a blind hand and knock it on the head and cover yourself, you're asleep for another six hours. The inner dependence can never fail.

Courage means to have that which is necessary in your heart. Encourage means to put into the heart of someone that which must be there. 'Encourage.' '*En coeur*.' So where is courage? It is not in muscles. It is in the heart. Therefore, you find great people have not been strong people. They had the moral strength with which they could defy the universe, leave alone worlds or people or teachers or devils. They could defy the universe, and get away with it. So we must know where these strengths are to be, from where we have removed them and put them outside.

Why the strongest nation has people who are always running after guns? Because personal strength doesn't exist any more, personal courage doesn't exist any more. So we buy one gun, a second gun, a third gun, a fourth gun, and have an arsenal inside the house. And one day, your mother walks in, and in the dark you don't know who she is and you shoot her down. And then weep in court.

So, external strength is inner weakness. Inner strength may look like external weakness, but it is not, because this is the real strength. Like when you say, "At its core it is strong." So, we have to put back everything into the heart. Now, what is everything? It cannot be piecemeal. That I put back strength, I put back wealth, I put back insurance, I put back...

Not like that. What is everything and yet nothing? It is divinity. I can put Him in as nothing, and it becomes everything. If I seek to put Him in as everything, time until the end of eternity will not suffice. It's like putting in grains of sand into a thimble, counting them. It's not possible. If you have to fill a box, it will take you years. Therefore, we have to have this idea of nothingness, God as nothingness from which everything comes. Therefore no form, no name, no attributes, no qualities, nothing. That nothingness we have to absorb into ourselves, put Him there inside the heart. From that nothingness now comes everything.

Therefore, by putting nothing in my heart, I have everything in my heart. But when I seek to put everything in my heart, I have nothing. Then we will be like bewildered children in toy shops, not knowing what to take. Or like one of my friends who was driving me one day, from my office in Madras to my home, and we passed a ladies' college. The college had just closed, and there were a few hundred girls outside. And his hand started to shake, and I said, "What's going on? You are wobbling." He said, "No, no. I was just thinking. Suppose somebody stopped my car now and said, 'You can take the pick of these girls.' You know I will go mad." I said, "Why?" He said, "They are all so beautiful, which one to choose?" This is the problem of the child in the toy shop, of a man in a restaurant, of a drunkard in a bar. "Which to take? All are nice gleaming bottles. All expensive.

Which?" And if you try them one after the other, you know what happens – mixed drinks!

So, this is what happens to us in life. Children with mixed toys, lovers with mixed loves, drunkards with mixed drinks. All ending up in a mess in the gutter. No mixing please! Adulteration means mixing. Not impurity. To adulterate something with another is impure. Water and milk. Water by itself is pure. Milk by itself is wonderful. I can live without milk but not without water. Yet I am not allowed to water the milk, because it is adulterated milk. When I mix my loves, it is adultery. So, no mixing, because the One, the Perfect cannot be mixed with anything else. I cannot have two gods. Now that is a mixture. It is adultery all over again. Three is hopeless. Four is mixed drinks, gutter! One God! Which in our Mission we put beautifully: "*One Master, One Mission, One Method*." The three are essentially the same.

So for those of us who are strong spiritually, there is no death. We shall go into a blissful samadhi from which we shall not come out. That will be the final samadhi. That is why when saints pass on, it is called the *mahasamadhi*, the ultimate samadhi, the final samadhi from which there is no return. They don't come back into this conscious existence. When we enter into samadhi, we come back again and again, because we have yet to work off our samskaras, and have to achieve that balanced condition from which alone one can go away finally.

For those of us I hope there will be none who are not strong enough to tread this path, let us hope they will pass on knowing that death is a new opportunity, where everything is clean. You start off with a new slate. You open a new page, and you have infinite possibilities from that state. Nature does not deny opportunities. This is not an accounts book where the debits of the past year are carried over to the first page of the new accounts book. And debts mount and mount and mount until we go to the debtor's prison. It's not like that.

In God's accountancy there is no debit at all. There is only opportunity, opportunity, and more opportunity. And I pray that you should all make use of these opportunities, and evolve out of this existence, into the higher existence, and to the highest, by His grace.

Thank you.

7

Dying Rightly

I have tried to place before you some thoughts on the spiritual life, and tried to compare it with religion – religion and spirituality. I don't know how well I have managed it, but, today I think I should try to conclude the whole thing by referring again to death. "Death, the great leveler," they say. And we often refer to the fact that king or pauper, man or woman, saint or sinner, the end of the human life is the same for all. In that sense we say death is the great leveler. But for me it seems to point to the fact that the leveling is after death. Some people have asked me questions, "How is this possible that we can begin life with equal opportunity? Does it not go against this business of samskara in Sahaj Marg?" It's a valid question, but it also shows that we don't understand Sahaj Marg very well yet, for several reasons.

The first reason is Babuji's definition of death itself, that when we become unable to bear the loads

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and the burdens of this life, nature brings a pause in the existence, in the worldly existence, temporal existence, and gives us relief, so that the self can recoup its energies once again, review its life, work off as much samskara as possible, and start afresh.

Now why do we start afresh? Precisely because in that interregnum between this end and that beginning, it has not been possible to work off all the samskaras. There is some remnant, some residue. So, we come again. So death is really a holiday from life. And Babuji has used this beautiful analogy, that even the prisoners in the dungeons are let out for one or two hours every day to go up in the sunshine in the courtyards, to have fresh air, to have some exercise, so that they can face the next period of incarceration in the dungeon.

Therefore, death is not a punishment. Neither is death an end. Some Occidental writers on the subject treat death with contempt, with fear. And many people have been educated into thinking that death is to be avoided, even by committing suicide, which is ridiculous. You cannot avoid death by dying. You can only avoid death by living properly. Because again and again I have these references in the books that I read, of all classes, whether it be science fiction, whether it be philosophy, poetry, this misery about death. "Why am I born if I am only to die?" I ask you, "What else should I be born for?" It's like saying, "Why do I get onto this TGV if I only have to get out of it again?"

It would be as silly. A journey does not mean that you go on and on forever. Life goes on, but not journeys.

So, again and again we come back to this idea that when we think of life in the body only as the true life, and that after the body drops off we have no existence, we are going into some sort of limbo, some sort of, I don't know, dirty thing, we make the mistake ourselves. So whatever may be the residual samskara that we bring to this life, it is absolutely a fact that at the beginning we all have the same opportunity that any one of us has.

Now, this opportunity can be utilised in several ways. It doesn't mean immediately that suppose, for example, we have a deaf-mute who is also blind. Or, we have a cretinous child. You can turn around and ask, "But you yourself said we cannot help mental patients, because they cannot use their mind to meditate." Nevertheless, the opportunity exists. But how? Now this you have to think about. How does this opportunity exist? How is it to be utilised? Because life on earth cannot be a life of futility, a life of misery, a life of unending despair. It cannot be. And people who think it is, they are denying God, denying His justice, His mercy, His benevolence, and denying His love more than anything else.

Today we find people questioning God's mercy, questioning God's love. "If God exists, why is this child like this?" On the contrary, we should ask, "God being what He is, Love itself, why is this child like this?" It must be an enquiry, not a doubt. Our faith must come into play. "Why, if God is love, He is merciful, He is compassionate, yet this child is born like this?" Then we come to the answer of Sahaj Marg, that it is because of the samskaras of the past. Does it mean eternal condemnation to this state in life, this station in life, this situation in life, these miseries? Certainly not. So what is the escape route? What is the explanation that God being where He is, we being where we are, yet there is so much misery? He is love, I am miserable. He is merciful, I feel that I am a sinner, that I have no redemption. He is compassionate, I feel bereaved, lost, unpardoned. How can he be compassionate and I continue to feel guilty? Because we don't feel. We have lost feeling. We have lost touch. So the fault lies in us, not in Him.

I repeat, there is no doubt that opportunity at the beginning is the same. I find this thought reflected for instance in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. You may or may not believe in it, but it is an old system, and a superb system, where again this thought is reflected – that, at the moment of death, everything is possible. Babuji has said this again. Those of you have read *My Master* will recall that Babuji has said, "At the moment of death, it is possible to take the soul from here and put it there, to liberate it." The trouble begins thereafter. So the need to die in the right way.

Now when we are afraid of death, and we say, "I don't want to die at all," how can we accept this idea that we have to die correctly? Die rightly? Constant remembrance is very much a feature of this dying rightly. Because if you are ever in His memory, remembering Him all the time, and our end comes in this life, with the thought of the Master in our mind, He comes, takes us away. That is liberation. That is, the moment of death becomes the moment of liberation. If you don't have that thought, if you have desires, if you have fears, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* puts it very dramatically.

Tracing the course of the soul from the moment of death, through day one, day two, day three, day four, day five, they say: "Now the soul is on its path. Liberation is getting not so easy. The soul sees demons or temptations in the hereafter. Don't believe it," because this lama is giving advice to the departed soul through his own psychic powers. He says, "Don't be distracted by either. If you see demons, they are projections of the fears in your mind. If you see *apsaras*, divine houris, beautiful damsels waiting for you with outstretched arms, beware of them too, because that is also a creation of your desires. Neither exists. Go on. Liberation is yet possible."

At the end of day one, day two begins. They say, "Now you will find yourself in darkness, but remember that in eternity there is no darkness. This darkness is a projection of the darkness in your mind. Gather up your courage, negate this darkness. Throw it out of your mind, and you will see brilliant light. Walk towards it. Liberation is yet possible."

It goes on giving guidance like this, until finally on the forty-first day it says, "Now your journey through this medium is finished. The next womb is waiting for you. At least enter this womb with faith, with courage, knowing that liberation is yet possible, though you have to exist once again in this mortal world." The soul is reborn.

At every moment of this transition between this death and that life, liberation continues to be possible. Liberation was possible absolutely at the moment of death. Possibilities, according to the Tibetan tradition, continue through death. It continues into the next life. What is holding us back? According to them, our fears and temptations. According to Sahaj Marg, our samskaras. So what is the difference? There is no difference. All traditions which are not religious per se speak of the same possibility. Religion talks of death, burial, judgement, possible redemption. The non-religious, I won't say they are irreligious, but those philosophies which transcend religion always speak of the possibility of escape. Not an escape in the idea of escape like a sinner running away from something, or a prisoner breaking out of jail, but escaping from our own self, the lower self. This possibility is absolute, it is eternal. It has never stopped at any moment in time. It has never been withheld from anybody. This is the absolute justice, mercy, compassion, love of the Almighty. In this we have to have faith.

This being so, how can our opportunities differ at birth? They did not differ at death. Because anybody dying with this thought of the Ultimate, with the thought of his goal in mind, reaches that goal. Anybody! To ensure that we have the right thought at the moment of oblivion, is all this problem that we are facing – meditation, constant remembrance, developing love for the Master. So that if we have established it as a continuing truth in our existence, it cannot depart from us at the moment of death. We shall die with this thought, with this condition. And therefore there is no more question of being reborn, and of not being liberated.

Hinduism says, even if you are not able to do this, if at the end of your life, at that moment you are able to think of God in His absolute form, which is a formless, attributeless, nameless existence, then too, this is possible. Therefore, in India you have this funny idea of naming your children after gods and goddesses. Because if at the last moment you say, "Rama, come here," nevertheless you are thinking about Rama. I have written about this in *My Master*, I think, where at the moment of death, if the priest is available, and he is able to enter your consciousness, even though you may be in a coma, and revive this thought of your goal, of the Master, of God in you, still it is possible.

So, it is not right to separate life from death and say in life we had opportunities, in death there is no opportunity. In life everything was possible, death is a negation of all possibility. In life we have happiness and joy, in death we have only darkness and misery. This is absolutely silly. Master has been very emphatic on this point. Otherwise he would not say, "In Sahaj Marg we accept anybody." You are not evaluated when you come to this practice. Nobody asked you about your past. We only talk of your future. And again and again Babuji Maharaj has said, "In this life, in this existence, if you don't achieve the goal, forget it." Why 'forget it?' Not that it is a denial of the opportunity. Because the mistake we have committed once again, if you continue to commit with a Master of the highest calibre, who guarantees liberation at the minimum, if you miss that opportunity too, what is going to be a better opportunity for you? If this opportunity is not used, what other opportunity are you going to use? If you do not use it now when it is available, when are you going to use it in the future? In that sense he says, "Make sure that in this life, here and now, it is achieved." Then you are sure of it. But it does not mean opportunity decreases. It does not mean opportunities are lost. We may have missed so many opportunities, yet life itself is continuing opportunity. If you like, you can define life as continuing opportunity. We miss one after the other, but yet there are more opportunities ahead.

Any single opportunity can be the last one for us, in two senses. Either we use it rightly and off we go, or we miss it and on we go. There is absolutely no question of annihilation of the soul, annihilation of the consciousness. It is absurd. It is stupid. It is a crime against humanity to talk like that. Annihilation of what? So, we have to re-evaluate. You don't even require faith. We need effort. Faith in what? Faith in myself, that I can do this. What is necessary? That which you are being taught.

Now to come back to this question of people who cannot meditate. Some are able to meditate. It doesn't mean that everybody who meditates is going to get to the goal, because it depends on what we put into it, how well we meditate, with what seriousness of purpose. Is it just a hobby? Is it just a pastime? Or is it a lifetime endeavour? Has it become my life? Am I meditating even when I am doing other things? Constant remembrance, in one sense, means that too. This is self-effort. But we know that by self-effort we are not going to succeed. Not that it is impossible, because Babuji says, "It is possible." Then why is it not possible to the majority of human beings, or perhaps to all humanity minus one or two? First, because we don't believe in the possibility. Second, even if we believe in it, we don't attempt it. Third, we are distracted on the way, hither and thither, and we lose the way. Three very simple reasons. None of these is interposed between me and my goal by either a God or by destiny. I do it.

Now what about those who cannot meditate, who have no mind to use? Are they doomed for eternity? Samskara has to be worked off in one way or the other. Either we have the bhog where we undergo the effects of the samskaras, which may be reflected as pleasure and pain, enjoyment and non-enjoyment, all the two opposites. We cannot insist that the bhog should be in this way or in that way. Some have to undergo the past samskaras by being rich and suffering. Some have to undergo it by being poor and suffering. Rich people suffer as much as poor people, if not more. Some have to undergo samskara by being married many times, some by not being married at all. Some with many children, some with no children. In everything it is samskara.

As I said, "Death, the great leveler." You may live on the throne all your life, sleep on satin and silk, live in palaces, the end is the same. And he knows his problems, the king. Any king who is worth his salt and who is sensible will say, "For heaven's sake, remove this crown from my head and let me go." You know one of the famous monarchs of British history, for the love of a woman he gave up his throne, abdicated. Some people think he was a stupid fellow, "For a mere woman you see. To give up a throne!" But that is the people who lust after thrones.

So why a man gives up what he gives up, is decided not by him but by his samskara. Whom he loves is decided by samskara; in the purely material world I'm talking of now. Not love of God, not the pure abstract love, but love between man and woman, your children, your parents. All this is decided by samskara.

Why do you marry a particular person? It is again a samskara. Why, if you marry a second time, you again go and fall into the same ditch? Marrying a similar person who will kick you around, rob you of your money. Experience should have taught us better. But there is experience on one side, there is the pull of samskara on the other side. So knowing that we are making mistakes, we are continuing to make the same mistake again and again. There is no choice. You can see any much-married person. They think there is a change, but there is no change. The face may be different, the height may be different, the form may be different, the colour may be different. But that which attracts you is the same. Like a magnet will always attract iron in whatever form that iron is. It is in us. This tendency to pull towards us this or this or this. And this or this or this is only apparent. In reality it is always the same. It is always iron. So, the pull of the samskara.

Now, how much of this can I work off by my own self-efforts? Understanding that it may not be possible within one lifetime. That nevertheless the promise of nature, that we are all equal at birth as we were equal at death, must be fulfilled. There comes a Master.

So he complements, or supplements, whichever way you want to look at it, our abilities, our efforts towards reaching the goal. What I cannot do, He will do for me, provided I at least make the attempt. So that is the second way. One is by self-effort. It is possible if I am devoted to my liberation, dedicated to the effort – single-pointed integrity. But Babuji has said we must remember that with all the effort at our disposal, with all the dedication, with all the dedication to our goal, yet it takes forty-five years to move from point one to point two. So at least in today's life it is not possible, where human beings are not even sure of sixty years, seventy years, eighty years. Therefore, to have recourse to opportunity number two, look for a guru; tie him to yourself in such a way that you cannot break away from him. This becomes the second opportunity, the second possibility, the second way.

Now to look for a guru does not mean that I am impotent or imbecile. It only means asking for help in a situation in which I cannot do something myself. When I cannot repair my refrigerator, I call a refrigerator technician. When I cannot repair my telephone, I call a mechanic. When I cannot repair my car, I send it to the garage. If there is no loss of face and prestige in those things, why is there, or why do you think there is, a loss of prestige and face in looking for a guru? He is as much a mechanic or a chemist or whatever it is. Or perhaps everything put together. And why should we be shy of taking his help? Why should we feel proud and say, "No, no. I don't need a Master." In Occidental countries this is a very common disease. "No, no. I don't need a Master. What is a Master for? Why a Master?" Well then, you have to do it yourself. Nature does not condemn us. We condemn ourselves. That is way number two.

Way number three also exists, but that is beyond us. It is not really our way. What is that way? Perhaps you would like to think over it. It is very easy. It is the doctrine of grace. Now grace is at His disposal. He showers it when He will, where He will, upon whom He will. There is no question of deservingness; there is no question of effort; there is no question of anything.

Now, prayer is the way of attracting that grace. Not attracting in the sense of throwing a lasso and roping the horse and pulling it in. But prayerfully, penitentially, with an empty heart – just sitting and waiting. As Babuji Maharaj has said, "True prayer means not asking, not demanding, but just in the subtlest possible way placing the problem and just waiting." If He decides, He will solve it. If He doesn't, we continue to pray.

Now many people pray once and say, "Oh I'm praying but nothing happens." Yes, but if you pray once and nothing happens, you should pray again. You telephone and the man you want to speak to is not there, you telephone again. You telephone again a third time. You telephone again a fourth time, until you have got the person. If it is important, you do it again and again, isn't it? So why not pray again and again? We cannot set a limit to our prayers, either to the prayer that we offer, or to the number of times we shall pray, or to the time that we shall pray for. In effect prayer must become a constant way of life.

We meditate and make meditation a state of life, so that we are eternally in a contemplative mood, even when we are involving ourselves in other activities, which will mean minimum involvement in activities, maximum involvement in contemplation. Which will mean also automatically leading a right life, because we have no time and inclination to do what is not necessary, or what is wrong. So, we get into this contemplative mood. Keep in constant remembrance, the Master ever with us. Then there is nothing to worry about. Samskaras just disappear like mist when the sun rises. They don't exist any more. It is not that they are blown away or scattered away. The sun rises and the mist is gone. Like the sun rises and the darkness is gone. Is the darkness removed bit by bit? There is no such thing. Is fear removed bit by bit? Psychologists make this mistake that I am afraid of a dog, you are afraid of a cat, she is afraid of a snake. But there is only one fear. To my mind it is the fear of death.

Any fear in any situation is essentially the fear of death. And if that is removed there should be no other fear. A person who has no fear of death cannot be afraid of anything else. What else is there to be afraid of? We are afraid a dog will bite us because we may get rabies, we will suffer, we may become crazy, we will die. We are afraid of falling from a height, agoraphobia, because we are afraid to die. We are afraid of the water because we are afraid of dying. We are afraid of closed places because we are afraid that we will stifle and die.

All these phobias – claustrophobia, agoraphobia, photophobia, this phobia, that phobia – eventually it is the fear of death. If fear of death is removed there can be no other fear. Fearlessness can come at one stroke by removing one single fear, which is the breeding ground of all other fears. But we are trying to remove them one by one. "No, no, my fear of snakes has gone, but now I am afraid of dogs." Another session of therapy. Another thousand dollars. "Now I'm not afraid of dogs, but I am afraid of beetles." It's an endless thing.

We have always to come to the root of the problem. One single root cut, the tree falls. But if you are taking off leaf by leaf by leaf, then cutting the twigs, then cutting the branches, even before you have finished one branch, the next branch has come into existence. This is how we are leading life, by piecemeal efforts. Leaf by leaf by leaf. "What are you doing?" "No, no, I'm trying to cut down this tree." "How?" "I am removing from the top, you know, leaf by leaf by leaf." Will you ever succeed? Never, it is obvious. But cut the root and the tree is automatically dead, because you have removed the source of its sustenance. Remove samskaras, the root of our existence here in this mortal world is finished.

If this is not possible, then it is the question of grace, the question of prayer. Therefore when people come to us and say, "You know, this boy, he is not being cured. He is twenty-eight but he behaves as if he is eight years old. Can he meditate?" No. Obviously not. When he cannot brush his teeth, go to the toilet by himself, how is he going to meditate? But then the people get upset, annoyed, angry against God. But there is a way. But that way we don't understand, we don't accept. We think God must act directly. "Why should I pray?" This is another arrogance. "Why should I pray? If He is kind, should He not come and do it Himself?" It's like saying, "Why should I call my carpenter? If he's a good carpenter, should he not come?" How does he know you need him? So, prayer is putting before the Almighty your need in the subtlest form, not asking for anything. Leave it to Him to fulfil the need in His own way, in His own time, when He considers it appropriate.

So from this idea that opportunity is equal, death gives us equal opportunity. As we continue to live, the equality of opportunity is unfortunately being disintegrated by us, by our actions, by our foolishness. You will find this reflected in any sensible, mystical philosophy. Religions deny it; spirituality affirms it. If we want an affirmative life, we must go towards spirituality.

If you want a life of denial in the other sense, that I have somebody who is denying me everything, including redemption, including penitential rites, including anything, there is no possibility. But you will find in religions there is one vestigial remainder of this truth, that we are born with some samskaras, otherwise we would not be born. And there is this old ritual which still exists in churches, in Hinduism, in any other religion where we try to clean the child at its birth, or perhaps a few days later of those vestiges. Like baptism, like purificatory rites. But they have lost their significance. If they were working today, the child should have an absolutely marvelous saintly life. At its best, it should pop off immediately. Its work is over. Baptism should mean that child is ready to be buried.

You will remember a famous story about the benefit of satsangh I told you, perhaps in Courmettes. Narada, the great rishi is supposed to be able to travel in all dimensions, master of the seven worlds, like God Himself. He did not know what is the value of satsangh. So one day when Lord Narayana was going for his walk, Narada came and said, "Lord, what is the benefit of this satsangh? Everybody is talking about it, I don't understand it." So the Lord said, "Go to the world known as *bhuloka* (our world). There you will find a spider hanging from its web. Ask him this question." So Narada goes there, finds the spider, and he says, "Oh spider, can you tell me the value of satsangh?" The spider just explodes and dies.

Narada is perturbed. He thinks he has contributed to its death. He comes back to Narayana a little doleful, a bit miserable. He says, "Lord, this is what happened. I went and asked this question, and that spider just died." Narayana smiles, and he says, "Oh, is that what happened? And you don't understand the significance? Now go back to earth. A cow is giving birth to a calf. Ask that calf this question." So Narada goes back, the calf is just being born. He waits. The calf is born, he asks, "Oh calf, can you tell me what is the value of satsangh?" The calf just looks at him and dies.

Now he is really miserable. He says, "What is going on?" He is almost ashamed to go back to Narayana, but he has no other way. So he goes back to Narayana and says, "Lord, what are these tricks you are playing on me. The calf too died." He says, "Oh, how did that happen? Okay, doesn't matter. Now you go back to another particular place on earth, where a woman is being delivered of her child. Ask that child this question." Narada goes with no hope in his heart, miserable, afraid of the consequences of his visit. Suppose the child should die? But the Lord has said, and he must obey.

The child has just been born. He very prayerfully says, "Child, can you tell me this? What is happening? I want to know the benefit of satsangh." And then the child smiled and said, "Narada, have you not known it? I was the spider. And you the greatest of sages came before me. By satsangh with you (satsangh means 'to be with' also, 'to be with the truth,' 'to be with the light') by being with you just for a moment, I was liberated from that existence. Because of that I was reborn as a calf. Again you came to my help. By that momentary satsangh with you, I was removed out of that existence, now I am born as a human, which is the highest birth. Thank you, Narada, for coming a third time. You are now liberating me finally." And with prayer, it just folds its hands and says "*Om namo narayana*," or some such thing and the child dies. Then he understands that he has liberated the thing.

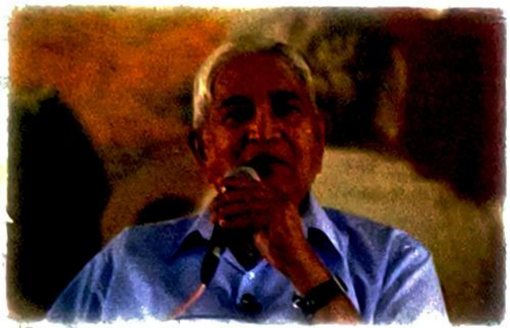
Satsangh with a great person liberates you. So in that sense, satsangh means to be always with. Satsangh. *Sat* means the truth, the eternal verity. *Sangha* means to be with. So in our meditation we are eternally with Him, or we should be if we are meditating in the right way. I am meditating upon the Divine light in the heart. The Divine presence is there, which is shedding its non-luminous luminosity. Who am I with when I meditate? And if I am with Him, where is my liberation? If I have been with Him through life, can I be separated from Him at death? If at death He is with me, does it not mean liberation? Can I go to hell with my God with me?

So, all these have to be digested, so that they may give us faith in what we are doing. If you have no faith in what you are doing, it becomes a ritual. If it is a ritual, it is a religion. And if it's a religion, we shall only die to be buried, and perhaps to be awakened on the day of judgement. And our rotten bodies coming up again and going to hell or to heaven as the case may be. It is faith that makes the difference between a ritual and a reality. Love becomes a ritual, when there is only the actions of love but not the heart behind it. With the heart in it, everything is pure. Without the heart in it, everything is dirty.

So, what makes faith possible? Not the liver, *le foie*, but *la foi* – faith! So let us forget the liver. He who lives is the liver. Forget this liver and remember that liver by using not *le foie*, but *la foi*. Have faith in what you are doing. Remember that when you meditate you are with God. Remember that when you are not meditating also He is there, because He is here [the heart]. My meditation is only to establish a contact with Him, like telephoning a friend and making sure he is there. Or calling, "Mummy, mummy," and she says, "Yes, darling. I am in the kitchen." This is all that is necessary.

If we do this we don't have to wait till death gives us equal opportunity, or the next life gives us equal opportunity. We all have that equal opportunity here and now. All that we need is the wisdom, the courage, and the faith to achieve that equality of destiny. I pray that it may be so.

Thank you.



Religion & Spirituality

"The absolute true teaching is when you don't teach but the student learns. The best teaching is assimilated when it is not taught."

"A real teacher continues to learn all his life. A teacher who has stopped learning is unfit to continue to be a teacher."

—P. Rajagopalachari

Religion & Spirituality contains the talks given by Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari in July 1991 at the European Ashram in Augerans, France.

He addresses topics such as a universal view of religion, the pressing need for spirituality in today's world, acceptance of death, and the need for human beings to let go of all unnecessary attitudes, prejudices and divisions, in order to reach a spiritual goal in life.

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